ELECTION '08: 636 DAYS AND [illegible]NG

The Nation.

GLOBAL WARMING: NO MORE EXCUSES
Mark Hertsgaard

A MISSION TO CARACAS
Victor Navasky

THE THOUGHT XPERIMENTER
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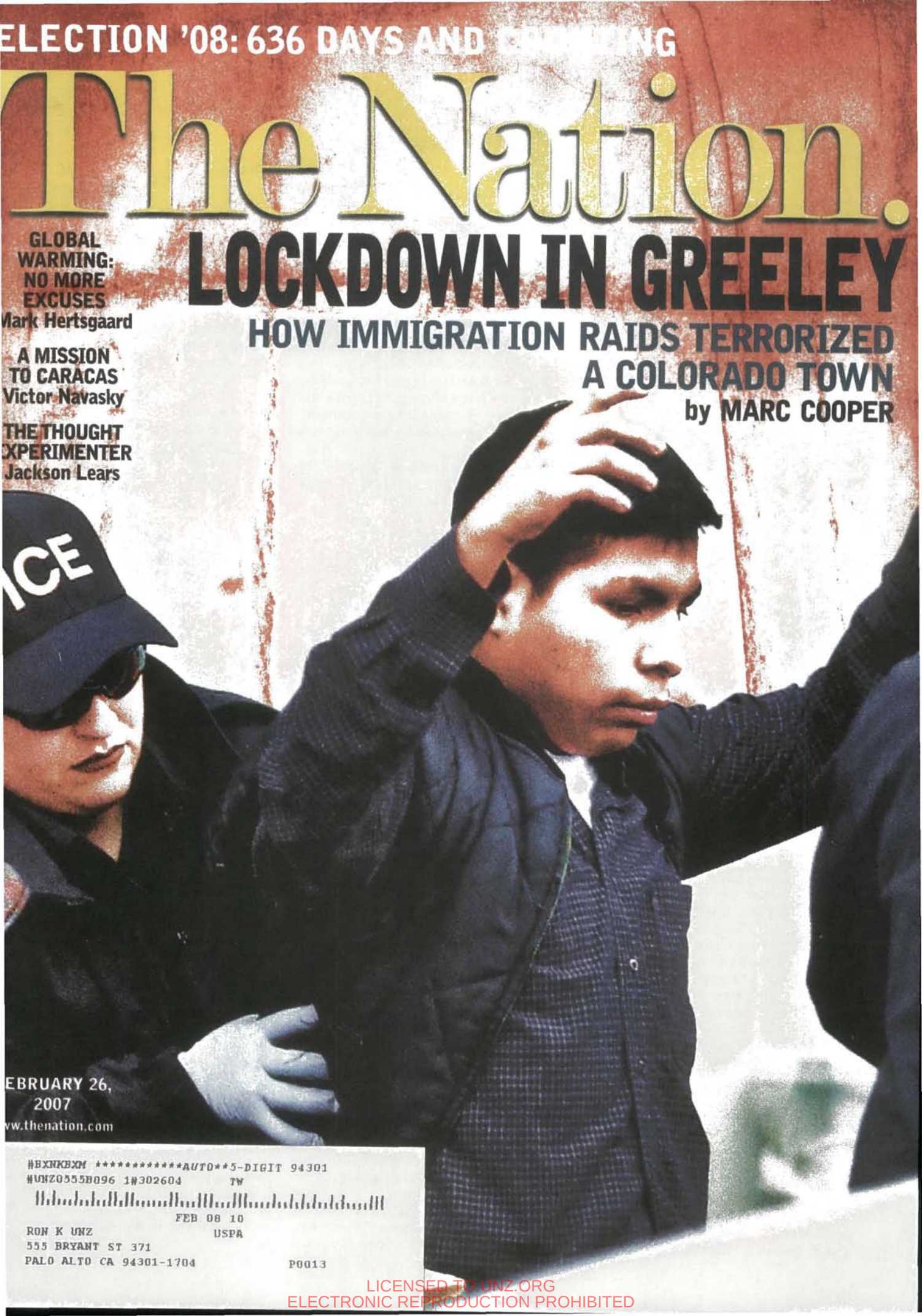
LOCKDOWN IN GREELEY

HOW IMMIGRATION RAIDS TERRORIZED A COLORADO TOWN

by MARC COOPER



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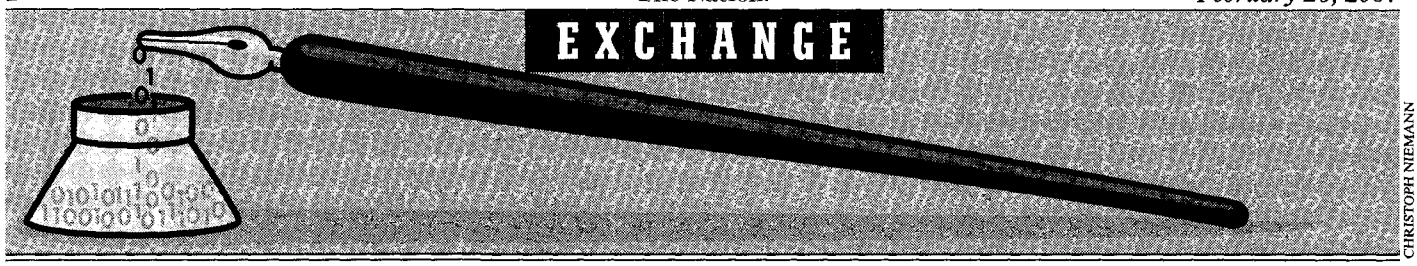

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Afghanistan Days, Kabul Nights

Northampton, Mass.

■ I'm glad Peter Bergen ["Waltzing With Warlords," Jan. 1] found things to approve of in my book *Kabul in Winter*. But I'm dumbfounded that he charges me with "sometimes" displaying "a tendency to see sinister conspiracies where they don't exist"—because I give a brief account of the influence of US oil interests on our Afghanistan policy. Surely this is old news.

The prospect of US oilmen building a pipeline from the Caspian fields to Pakistan by way of Afghanistan (thus circumventing Iran) was one reason the Clinton Administration tried to do business with the Taliban. Twice in 1997 Taliban leaders traveled to Washington (and Texas) to discuss the pipeline with officials of the State Department and the US oil conglomerate Unocal. Unocal itself disclosed that it spent between $15 million and $20 million on the initial stages of the project, including the salaries of two consultants hired to negotiate the deal: Hamid Karzai, now President of Afghanistan, and Zalmay Khalilzad, then a Pentagon planner, later Ambassador to Afghanistan and currently Ambassador to Iraq. Khalilzad's predecessor in Afghanistan, George W. Bush's first ambassador there, was Robert Finn, well-known Caspian oil expert. These facts, well documented by others, apparently suggest a "sinister conspiracy"—Bergen's term, not mine.

He doesn't quit there. According to Bergen, I write that Washington withdrew support from the Taliban "only" because the Taliban could not provide "security" for the pipeline project. This is a misrepresentation. In fact, I discuss at length what Bergen calls "the real reasons" the United States turned against the Taliban: their harboring of Al Qaeda and their treatment of women—although US concern for Afghan women has always been more PR than policy.

Bergen asserts, "The one thing the Taliban did provide was security, which is why they had legitimacy and popularity when they first came to power." This received wisdom applies to the Taliban's reception in southern Afghanistan but not the north, where anti-Taliban forces went on fighting. In addition Bergen says there is still no pipeline across Afghanistan "because it just doesn't make economic sense to build it." There is no pipeline today because there is still no security, the United States and NATO having thus far failed, like the Taliban, to provide it.

That doesn't mean dreams of oil are over. Plenty of people have pocketed plenty of money merely by making plans, and Afghan officials periodically announce that construction is imminent. Recently a US construction firm and a Russian manufacturer of oilfield equipment formed a "strategic alliance" to "help the Government of Afghanistan reopen and redevelop its oil and gas fields." The press release went by e-mail to US contractors under the heading "Smart place to be sending your resumes/CVs" and opened with this advisory: "It's private sector, so it'll pay." Is that a "sinister conspiracy" too, or oil business as usual in post-conflict "development" zones?

Bergen takes me to task for recycling "the trope" that in the 1980s, during the US proxy war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the CIA spent about $800 million to train and fund foreign "Arab-Afghan" fighters. To refute it, Bergen says that Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars* shows "there is no evidence" that the CIA "had any direct dealings with Osama bin Laden and his crew of foreign fighters." I confess I'm unable to locate that conclusion in Coll's pages, but it is beside the point. (Since the CIA is in the business of covering its tracks, it is naïve to think that "no evidence" of "direct dealings" means no dealings; Coll discusses any number of intermediaries, such as the Afghan commander Jallaladin Haqqanni, who "had the CIA's full support.") Bergen mistakenly implies that all Arab-Afghan fighters belonged to bin Laden's "crew." But recruiting and training foreign jihadis was the policy of Pakistan's ISI long before bin Laden set up his own camp in 1986; and it was a policy CIA Director Bill Casey fully approved. Many of the estimated 35,000 Arab-Afghans of the 1980s were not Arabs but Uighurs, Uzbeks, Filipinos and other foreign jihadis (from forty-three countries) who joined and fought for various CIA- and Saudi-funded, ISI-directed, Afghan mujahedeen parties, as did bin Laden himself before he came into his own. ANN JONES

Chicago

■ I was dismayed by the tone of Peter Bergen's review of three books about contemporary Afghanistan by Western authors. He starts off with a salacious and pointless description of his visit to a Kabul brothel staffed by Chinese women "where $60 will buy you more stimulating forms of intercourse" than conversation. He states that a large part of the Taliban's current strength comes from "a generally conservative population who worry about corrupting foreign influences"; perhaps, but might it not also come from people's anger at a brutal foreign invasion and occupation?

Bergen laments the decline of optimism (from whom?) about "President" Hamid Karzai, who would be, and has been, more accurately described as the "mayor of Kabul"—and even that position is looking increasingly tenuous. The real power in those parts of Afghanistan not under Taliban control is, and has been from the start of the invasion, foreign military forces, principally the United States, for whom Karzai has never been anything more than a puppet. Remember his disastrous trip here not so long ago, and his humiliation by Bush?

Bergen refuses to consider the possibility that US motives for invading and occupying Afghanistan could have been anything but pristine, dismissing the idea that interest in a pipeline might have influenced US actions; he states without proof that the "real reasons" were Taliban mistreatment of women and the Taliban's harboring of Al Qaeda. The latter reason is more plausible but fails to take into account the abundant evidence that neocons had been planning a move like this long before 9/11. Bergen also flatly denies that the CIA might have helped fund Osama bin Laden's fighters during the Soviet occupation (actually, he only denies any *direct* contact).

The root of Bergen's myopia comes from his belief that where the foreign occupation failed was in its attempt at "the wholesale export of Western democratic values and institutions into countries with very different social mores and political structures." So, you see, Americans invaded Afghanistan, destroyed whatever there was left to destroy, killed unknown numbers of Afghans and continue to oppress them, all for the sake of Western democratic values, which those poor benighted Afghans are just too backward to appreciate. DEREK DAVIS

BERGEN REPLIES

Washington, DC

■ Thanks to Ann Jones for her letter. I described her book as "evocatively" written, a "devastating critique" and "deeply reported." There were two factual matters I took issue with. I don't dispute that there was a widely reported effort by US energy interests to play footsy with the Taliban during the mid-1990s, when they first came to power. But I noted that Jones erroneously suggests that this effort fell through because the Taliban could not provide security. In reality the Taliban's dismal human rights record and harboring of Al Qaeda sabotaged the project. As someone who spent time in Afghanistan during the civil war of the early 1990s before the rise of the Taliban, visited on two long trips while the Taliban were in power and has been back more than half a dozen times since they were ousted, I can attest that the one thing the Taliban did provide was security, the issue that continue

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PRINTED FEBRUARY 7 VOLUME 284, NUMBER 8

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Cover design by Avenging Angels, photo by Richard Hackett; page 11 photo by Richard Hackett, Longmont Daily Times-Call*; illustrations by Christoph Niemann and Peter O. Zierlein*

EDITORIALS

Into 2008

On the eve of the 1992 elections, novelist E.L. Doctorow reminded *Nation* readers why the bizarre and troubling pageants known as presidential elections matter so deeply. "The President we get is the country we get.... He is the artificer of our malleable national soul." Thanks in part to mass-media suffusion, wrote Doctorow, the President has become "the face of our sky, the conditions that prevail. One four-year term may find us at reasonable peace with one another, working things out, and the next, trampling on each other for our scraps of bread."

Don't we know it—now more than ever. The truth (and implicit peril) of Doctorow's observation has never been more evident than in the endless mudslide of domestic and foreign disasters that have darkened our horizons during George W. Bush's six years in office. In Baghdad and New Orleans, prevailing conditions are stormy at best, bleak and seemingly intractable at worst.

America desperately needs new leadership, not merely a different face. It needs Democrats to do more than recapture the White House in 2008: The fiery tenor of the times also presents a historic opportunity to reverse the destructive course of a quarter-century of backlash-driven politics. Like the Great Depression of the 1930s and the civil upheavals of the 1960s, the unrelenting catastrophes of Bush's presidency have pried open the settled minds of Americans. Ideologies are in flux—and so are partisan loyalties and identities. The 2006 midterms confounded the calculations not only of the GOP, whose culture-war wedges finally lost their magic, but also of the centrist Democratic establishment, whose thin gruel of fiscal conservatism, go-along patriotism and corporate-friendly policy prescriptions proved less attractive to voters than a few maverick Democrats' hearty populist progressivism and unblinking realism about the horrors in Iraq.

Given our profoundly unsettled political climate—and the absence of a sitting President or Vice President in the field for the first time since 1928—it's no wonder so many candidates have already, and so early, put themselves forward. Normally there would be no more dreadful prospect than a two-year campaign for President. But this time around, as they showed with some startling choices for Congress in 2006, more Americans are ready to rethink the givens. It can't hurt—just this once—to have many months to sort through the strengths and defects of the contenders.

The early favorites come hearteningly close, for the first time in our history, to actually "looking like America." It will be tempting for Democratic voters to get caught up in the symbolism of the candidates—not just the "firstness" of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton or Bill Richardson but also the rise of John Edwards from blue-collar beginnings. The symbolic statement that Democrats need to make in 2008, however, runs broader and deeper than race, gender or class. More than a President who looks different, we need one who thinks—and acts—differently. We need a progressive champion who will boldly reassert government's role as protector and uplifter of the people at home, and reinvent American foreign policy as a force for peace, not coercive power, across the globe.

At the same time, we need a leader who shuns the lordly powers that have gradually accrued to the office of the President, and that our current President has taken to lawless extremes. The huge shadow of the chief executive is part of what has deformed our political system, blotting out the rich, boisterous conversations and arguments from below and diminishing the competing influences that ought to inform and shape the national direction. No single person can deliver what we seek if that person isn't both supported by and grounded in a small-d democratic revival—starting with the style and content of the campaign itself. We need a candidate who understands that he or she can't succeed unless the people are standing alongside (ahead of the power brokers and money guys), ready to help enforce their will.

This magazine has already staked out its position on one of the day's great challenges: ending the military occupation

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EDITORIALS

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2007 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. **When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Basic annual subscription price: $52 for 47 issues. Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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of Iraq. We will not support any candidate who does not call for a speedy withdrawal of our troops. But the nation confronts epochal challenges at home, too. The next President must reform outmoded immigration policies, tackle the national plague of resegregated communities and schools, and address growing economic inequities and insecurities. With whites fast becoming a minority nationwide, blacks still sitting at the back of the economic bus and a historic influx of Hispanics (who have already become the largest and least protected national minority group), there is a widespread racial and social unease simmering below the surface, all across the country. We need a President capable of recognizing it, brave enough to name it and strong enough to heal the breaches before they crack open.

Conservatives have preached for years that government is everyone's problem and nobody's solution—and with the Bush Administration, they have completed the process of turning their preachments into prophecy. The ongoing Gulf Coast catastrophe has exposed more than the racial and economic injustices of our Two Americas; it has also demonstrated the consequences of the effort to rip apart the safety net Democrats had been knitting since 1913. To pull it back together and resuscitate our common purpose, we need a President who can imagine other people's suffering—the suffering of American soldiers and their families, the agony of Iraqi families being blown up and shot up by those boys and girls from Skokie and Mobile and Watts, and the grinding economic uncertainties consuming not just low-wage workers but, increasingly, the middle class. "Feeling pain" is not enough: The times require a President with the courage and vision to use the world's most powerful office to stamp out misery, not multiply it.

Our money-drenched politics makes it difficult for such a figure to emerge. This campaign promises to kill off the notion of public funding for elections once and for all, as candidate after candidate, fearful in particular of being fatally outspent in TV ads, declines the matching public funds that come with spending limits. Thus will the corporations and the K Street crowd gain even greater access to power. It doesn't help that the always problematic primary system, designed to produce stronger candidates by forcing them to woo voters personally in small states like Iowa and New Hampshire, may collapse with early, big-money-driven contests in supersized states like California and Florida.

There is hope in the upsurge of Internet politics, which only began to flash its potential in 2004. When Howard Dean rocketed into the fundraising stratosphere courtesy of a legion of small online donors, and when beleaguered progressives began to connect and organize through web-driven vehicles like MoveOn.org, it became clear that the next technology to dominate politics had the potential to cut in a drastically different direction from the last. With YouTube exposing every candidate's "macaca moment," it has suddenly become vexingly difficult for candidates to hide their warts and control their public image. And the Internet's unprecedented potential for creating unlikely bandwagons and raising big fast money—especially for long-shot insurgents—could shake up American politics in larger and even healthier ways.

As this issue goes to press, 636 days remain till that most welcome of dates: November 4, 2008. Let us—all of us—use this generous gift of time to do more than look for a "winning" candidate

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EDITORIALS

Molly, in Her Own Words

There is the mainstream press and then there was Molly Ivins, who always swam against the tide, and who died January 31 at 62 after a brave battle with breast cancer. Molly was... well, rather than tell you what Molly was—others throughout the land have done that—why don't we just show you? Herewith, from our own pages, a Molly Ivins sampler:

"The bill to make English the Official State Language came to naught, which is just as well since we'd have had to deport the entire state leadership if it was passed. Clements [the governor of Texas]...said he knows the N.C.A.A. has a hard task and he 'commensurates' with 'em and he hopes they 'secede.'" (August 15/22, 1987)

"Former Congressman Tom Loeffler is now the Reagan Administration's new point man...for lobbying on aid to the *contras.* Loeffler...is the guy who thinks you get AIDS through your feet, as we learned when he wore shower caps on his while on a trip to San Francisco, lest he acquire the disease from the bathroom tile." (August 15/22, 1987)

"In the line of journalistic duty, I attended the God and Country Rally featuring Phyllis Schlafly, Pat Robertson and Pat Boone, and am filing a worker's compensation claim against *The Nation.*" (September 14, 1992)

On the State Attorney General (Jim Mattox): "He's so mean he wouldn't spit in your ear if your brains were on fire." (February 7, 1994)

"I have always claimed that being a literate Texan is like being bilingual." (July 3, 1995)

"We are also pleased to announce the re-election of Senator Drew Nixon of Carthage: Nixon is the fellow who was found by Dallas police in a car with not one but three prostitutes. He explained he thought they were asking for directions." (November 25, 1996)

"We also elected some railroad commissioners, who more or less—mostly less—regulate the oil bidness, and that makes as much sense as anything else in this Great State." (November 25, 1996)

"I know what kind of governor this guy has been—if you expect him to do for the nation what he has for Texas, we need to talk." (January 3, 2000)

We could go on, but as Molly might have said, "Well, sheesh."

For tributes by Ronnie Dugger and others, go to www.thenation.com.

Let us imagine, and insist upon, the election of a President with the broad heart, the sharp but open mind and the principled passion to seize the opportunity that now exists for a long-term political realignment in America—who can set not only Democrats but a strong national majority back on track toward the goals of equality, opportunity, true democracy and social justice.

COMMENT

Killer Weather Ahead

There is implicit good news in the mostly bad news in the latest big global warming report: From now on, politicians will find it harder to do little or nothing to fight this problem. The release of the report on February 2 by the world's leading scientific body on global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), ranks as a landmark development. Using unusually blunt language for a scientific document, the report describes global warming as "unequivocal" and says it is "very likely" caused by humans. The results, according to the report, will likely include more frequent heat waves and stronger droughts and storms, while sea levels will continue to rise for more than a thousand years. The silver lining is that such plain-spoken warnings should make it difficult for anyone to argue that greenhouse gas emissions should not be reduced. Capitol Hill already had been aflutter with prospective global warming bills; the report makes it more likely that one will land on George W. Bush's desk by year's end. Bush will face a choice: Sign the bill despite the presumed opposition of the oil and coal interests he has championed, or veto it and leave fellow Republicans open to attack on what's shaping up as a top-tier issue in the 2008 elections.

As for the bad news in the report, it confirms that the battle to prevent global warming has been lost. Now the race to survive it has begun. Because we waited so long to act, the best humanity can do now is slow global warming down to where we can hope to endure it with relatively manageable damages. How bad things eventually get will depend on how much greenhouse emissions are cut, and how quickly. But the momentum of the climate system—the fact that carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for decades, and oceans store heat for centuries—guarantees that global warming will get worse before it gets better (unless someone invents a miracle technology to strip existing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere).

Even if humanity stopped all greenhouse gas emissions today, the IPCC notes, global temperatures would still rise 1.1 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. An immediate stop is impossible; it would mean shutting off every electric power plant, automobile, furnace and other device anywhere in the world that runs on oil, coal or natural gas, as well as halting tropical rainforest destruction. Thus the IPCC calculates a range of possible future temperature increases that vary by how quickly emissions are or are not reduced. At the very least, says the report, temperatures will rise

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COMMENT

2.0 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100, assuming a rapid shift away from fossil fuels. More likely is an increase of 3.2 to 7.2 degrees.

These numbers imply that there is very little time for humanity to avoid passing a climate threshold known as the two-degree target. Endorsed by the European Union and many top scientists as the maximum amount of warming above pre-industrial-era levels that humanity can tolerate before damages become unmanageable, the target can be confusing to Americans because it refers to two degrees Celsius. The equivalent in Fahrenheit is 3.6 degrees. At first glance, that sounds roomy enough. After all, the IPCC estimates that "likely" future temperature rise will range between 3.2 and 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit; thus if we decarbonize our economies fast enough to hit the low end of that range, the threshold could be avoided. The problem is, humanity's past greenhouse emissions have already caused the temperature to rise 1.1 degrees Fahrenheit over the last century. That means we will pass the threshold if we raise the temperature by only 2.5 degrees—barely more than the lowest amount the IPCC considers feasible. And even in that case, we will still face considerable sea-level rise and more killer heat waves, droughts and hurricanes.

There are no good answers to global warming, only degrees of bad. But speedy action might let us avoid the most catastrophic scenarios. Scientists say we must cut emissions 80 percent by 2050, which is what the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act, sponsored by Bernie Sanders, Barbara Boxer and others, mandates. Habitual foot-draggers ExxonMobil and the Bush Administration look almost comical as they reposition themselves for the battle to come. Bush uttered the words "global climate change" in a State of the Union address for the first time last month; ExxonMobil announced it would stop funding some climate-change deniers. But neither the White House nor the oil giant accepts mandatory limits on greenhouse emissions. They simply recognize that Congress is going to pass a bill this year, and they know that in Washington if you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu. Defenders of the status quo will want a bill that sounds good but does little except defuse pressure for real change. And that would be the worst outcome of all. MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation*'s environment correspondent, is a fellow of The Nation Institute.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

THE MADNESS OF NANNY DICK

So Cheney now seems bonkers.
As his condition grows
More serious, will he tell us
It's "in its final throes"?

Mission to Caracas

On December 29 Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela, recently re-elected with a whopping 61 percent of the vote, announced his intention not to renew the broadcast license of Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), whose concession will expire in May. "They better go packing," he said, adding lest he be misunderstood, "Start turning your equipment off."

The announcement was not out of the blue, since a few days earlier Venezuela's Minister of Communication and Information, William Lara, had said that licenses of privately owned media would be subject to revision, and the fate of RCTV would be decided by popular survey. Chávez now put it more colorfully. His Venezuela, he said, would not tolerate media "at the service of coup-plotting, against the people, against the nation, against the national independence and against the dignity of the Republic." And when José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, denounced the move as censorship, Chávez called him a *pendejo* ("asshole"—translated by US media as "idiot") who had no business intervening in Venezuela's internal affairs.

In the weeks that followed, Chávez persuaded the legislature to give him the power to rule by decree for eighteen months, made known his plan to consolidate the parties of the left into one and announced his intention to nationalize various industries. Along the way he described Jesus Christ as "the greatest socialist in history," ended a speech to the National Assembly by shouting "Socialism or death!" and, after US officials expressed concern about recent developments, advised, "Go to hell, gringos! Go home!"

* * *

When Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, proposed last summer that I join a mission to Caracas, I had my qualms. First, I didn't speak Spanish (an interpreter can fix that, said Joel); second, I knew Chávez was overwhelmingly popular with the poor and I wasn't interested in participating in an anti-Chávez hit job, even in the worthy cause of human rights. I quickly learned that under Chávez the National Assembly had passed the potentially repressive Law of Social Responsibility, which for example bars stations from broadcasting messages that "promote, defend or invite breaches of public order" or are "contrary to the security of the nation." I also knew that in 2005 the National Assembly had increased criminal penalties for defamation and slander. But I shared Naomi Klein's view (published here March 3, 2003) that it was "absurd to treat Chávez as the principal threat to a free press in Venezuela. That honor clearly goes to the media owners themselves." (In the days leading up to the brief 2002 coup against Chávez, RCTV, as well as the three other major private stations, blanketed the airwaves with anti-Chávez speeches, interrupted only by oil company "public service" commercials, run free of charge, calling on viewers to take to the streets. When the coup began to collapse, RCTV blacked out the news, ran cartoons and instructed its staff to keep Chavistas off the air.)

Joel persuaded me that the mission, to be put together by CPJ's Carlos Lauria, in whose bona fides I had confidence, had no hidden agenda. Moreover, Joel argued, perhaps my *Nation* connec-

(*Continued on Page 23*

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COMMENT

Kill the Death Penalty

Working as a police officer, I have a unique vantage point from which to view the death penalty: It is no less than a vestige of medievalism. I have to live with the fact that at any given moment, to protect someone's life, I might become the judge, jury and executioner. I would lose no sleep if that came about. I have stood over corpses of children and elderly victims, I have seen perpetrators and victims of gang violence and I have investigated sickening murders where an entire family was bound and burned to death. I have met more than my share of cold-blooded murderers, including some in my own family. I have also lost dozens of my family members in religious massacres; one of my uncles was blown to bits by a bomb planted by terrorists.

The pain, suffering, bitterness and the feeling of helplessness leave a never-healing mark on a victim's family. Years after some of my uncles and aunts were murdered, my father still harbors hatred in his heart, thinks of revenge and ruminates over how things could have been different. On the other hand, having a close relative in my own family who killed three elderly people in cold blood has shown me another side of the picture. Instead of a caricature of a "murderer" we can all hate and condemn with ease, I was forced to see the human face on the criminal and the crime. I have also learned that the pain and suffering are not limited to the victim's family. Not only did we feel humiliated and disgraced, my relative's parents lay awake nights wondering what went wrong and whether they could have raised their child differently.

I don't condone what my relatives did, and I don't ask for mercy for them. I have no sympathy for killers, and I support the harshest punishment for homicide. Nevertheless, I firmly oppose the death penalty.

I have heard all the arguments supporting capital punishment and found them wanting. Moral arguments to support capital punishment are inadequate. For example, some people argue that if I kill someone, I give up my right to live. That might be a defensible principle if every murderer was, in fact, sentenced to death; but that's not the case. We play the role of God by judging who will die and who will live, while capital punishment sends out a dangerous message to impressionable minds that violence is a way to resolve problems.

Geography, politics, socioeconomic status of the victim and killer, timing, prosecutorial selection, jury composition, jurisdiction of police investigating the crime and the victim's and killer's gender and skin color usually determine who gets the death sentence. When it comes to the death penalty, there is only one deduction: This punishment is totally arbitrary and therefore should be held unconstitutional. Unfortunately, the politics of expedience guides our Supreme Court and Congress—and when it comes to capital punishment, we are still mired in the Dark Ages.

Since 1976 there have been more than half a million homicides in the United States, but the number of convicts on death row hovers near 3,300, and we have executed just over a thousand. In simple terms, since 1976, on average, roughly 20,000 people have been killed in America every year and just over thirty executed for murder. Considering that homicide has the highest "solved" rate of all serious crime (62 percent in 2002) and we send barely one out of 100 convicted murderers to death row, one might naïvely believe we are sending the worst murderers to death row. That deduction is not only naïve but dangerous. Between 1976 and 2005, 123 people convicted of murder and awaiting execution were exonerated, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Some were minutes from execution; most had spent more than ten years on death row. How many innocent people have we executed? Herein lies the two-pronged failure of capital punishment: irrational and arbitrary sentencing to death of a small number of murderers, and wrongful conviction and sentencing to death of many innocent people. These reasons should be sufficient to outlaw capital punishment.

I must emphasize that most of the convicts on death row are guilty, and the vast majority of police are honest and do their jobs honorably. But our criminal justice system does have corrupt prosecutors, lying crime-lab analysts, crooked cops and blind judges who have railroaded innocent people onto death row. It is impossible to design a perfect system. The most powerful moral, legal and professional argument against the death penalty is that it leads to execution of the innocent. We brazenly act as if we were God and condemn people to death, ignoring that we are mistake-prone humans. And if a democratic society executes criminals knowing that some may be innocent, aren't we all guilty of murder? I wouldn't want any innocent to be killed on my account.

There is a caveat that must be seriously considered by those of us who oppose the death penalty. We should never concentrate our efforts solely on the manifold problems of the death penalty or, as some do, on the humanity of the killer. It is immoral to ignore the victims' pain. We must pay equal attention to compassionate support for the families and other loved ones of the victims.

The fight against capital punishment takes on added importance in the era of the Roberts Supreme Court. While there was some revision of the death penalty under previous Courts, the current bench seems intent on overruling precedents that have stood for more than ninety years—as shown in its decision throwing out the "knock and notice" requirement during warrant searches.

An effective alternative to the death penalty already exists. Life in prison without parole is moral, practical and far less expensive than the complicated and flawed process that leads to the death chamber. With life imprisonment, the murderer is removed from society and forgotten, so that attention can be turned to the victim's family and their needs. The time has come to join the rest of civilized nations and abolish capital punishment. SUNIL DUTTA

Sunil Dutta, a sergeant in the Los Angeles Police Department, is working on a memoir, From Punjab to South Central Los Angeles.

ON THE WEB: Is George W. Bush our worst President ever? Nicholas von Hoffman examines the evidence (take our online poll). VideoNation report: Katrina vanden Heuvel challenges Congress to use its power of the purse on Iraq. William Greider on former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel's quixotic quest for the Democratic presidential nod.

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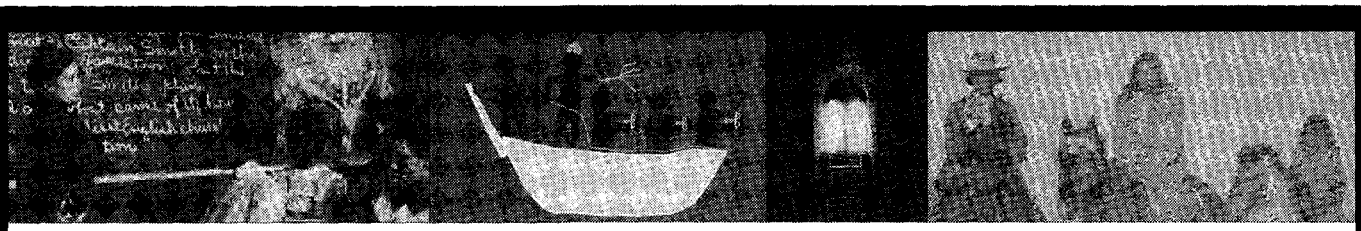

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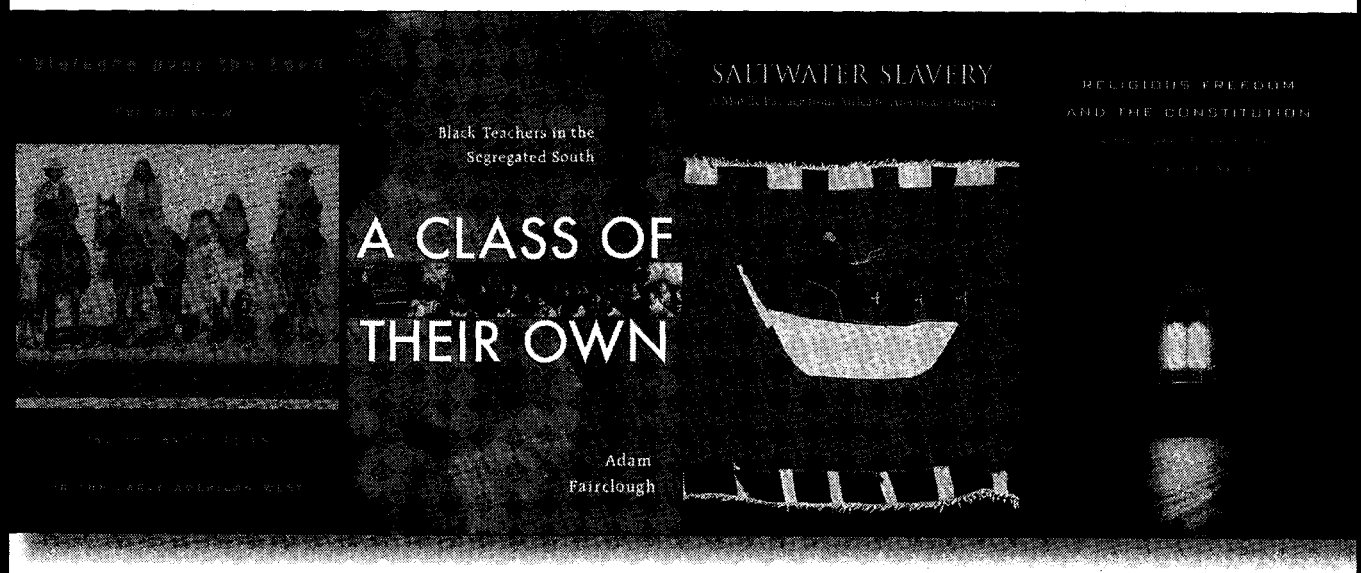
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ERIC ALTERMAN

Dude! Where's My Debate?

Lest I appear obsessed with how (simultaneously) wrong and out-of-touch mainstream pundits were about Iraq, let's turn now to trade, where conventional conservative wisdom is, amazingly, even more dominant.

A demand for tougher trade policies was nearly as fundamental to the success of the 2006 Democratic electoral sweep as opposition to Bush's catastrophic war. "There has been an evolution among almost all Democrats that these trade agreements simply need to be constructed in a different way—for fair trade, not for free trade," a victorious Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio explained. In Virginia, James Webb promised, "We are going to work very hard on issues of economic fairness in a country that has become too divided by class.... We must re-examine our tax and trade policies." And Rhode Island's Sheldon Whitehouse beat Lincoln Chafee, despite the latter's anti-Bush stance, by proclaiming, "It's time to reject trade deals like NAFTA and CAFTA that fail to protect American jobs."

Now, how many mainstream pundits share the fair-trade view endorsed by so many millions of voting Americans and demonstrated in decades of polls conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs? Virtually none. "Free trade," really just a nice name for a free *investment* policy that allows global corporations to move production and capital around the world with no thought to the human and environmental consequences and that offers countless exceptions when the powerful are threatened, is the religion of the American elite. The primary punditocracy outliers—Pat Buchanan and Lou Dobbs—oppose it from a right-wing nativist perspective. The columns by the *Washington Post*'s invaluable Harold Meyerson—which reflect a progressive, pro-labor, pro-environment, fair-trade perspective—may make him the only mainstream pundit with mainstream values on the issue.

As with Iraq, the punditocracy not only embraces a theoretical model that bears little resemblance to reality but also insults the intelligence and integrity of anyone who dares disagree. One expects such tactics from ABC's Cokie Roberts, Washington's most reliable weather vane of conventional wisdom. Earlier this year she warned that if Democrats pursue fair-trade instead of free-trade policies, they will be "essentially on the wrong side of history with globalization." Even among liberals, fealty to free trade is nearly as reflexive. During the 2004 election, *New York Times* "liberal" Nicholas Kristof went so far as to equate mistrust of corporate-friendly free-trade arguments with attempts to spread lies about John Kerry's war record. Kristof opined, "Intellectual consistency requires a tough look first at one's own shortcomings. So Republicans should be denouncing the smear against Kerry's war record, and Democrats should be denouncing their candidate's protectionist tone on trade." Kristof did not seem to realize that he was equating deliberate lies and slander—of a war hero, no less—with an honest disagreement on a matter of policy.

Kristof sounds kind of open-minded when compared with his colleague on the page, Thomas Friedman. Asked at a speaking gig, "Mr. Friedman, is there any free-trade agreement you'd oppose?" Friedman replied, "No, absolutely not," adding, "You know what, sir? I wrote a column supporting the CAFTA, the Caribbean Free Trade initiative. I didn't even know what was in it. I just knew two words: 'free trade.'" (Um, dude, you also didn't know its name: It's the Central American Free Trade Agreement.) Friedman has explained to those who disagree with him that there was "a country that tried that. It guaranteed everyone's job, maintained a protected market and told everyone else how to live. It was called the Soviet Union."

This column is not going to settle the dispute over whether the United States needs a tougher trade policy. I happen to think so, but I don't expect to convince, say, Paul Krugman or Jagdish Bhagwati that I am right and they are wrong. My question is this: Why does the opinion of the majority of the country get nothing but contempt in public discourse? Are Americans who question the dogma of "free trade" merely "duped by knaves like Pat Buchanan," as Friedman insists? Why are the arguments of economists like Frank Taussig, Dani Rodrik, Dean Baker and the folks over at the Economic Policy Institute considered beyond the bounds of rational debate? Of course, the inherent bias of the economics profession is one answer. But so too, I fear, are the results of globalization, which are largely great for the rich but not so hot for those holding on to their livelihoods by a rapidly fraying thread. A report issued by the American Political Science Association in 2004 titled *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality* noted, "Skewed participation among citizens and the targeting of government resources to partisans and the well-organized ensure that government officials disproportionately respond to business, the wealthy." As a result, less-advantaged Americans "are so absent from discussions in Washington that government officials are likely to hear about their concerns, if at all, from more privileged advocates who speak for the disadvantaged. Politicians hear most regularly about the concerns of business and the most affluent." This is true in terms of indirect as well as direct influence. Wealthy people and their corporations own newspapers and fund think tanks, public affairs television, university chairs, advertising campaigns, lecture series and the like. Ordinary people do not. With few exceptions, these same organizations and institutions represent the views of the wealthy and well connected.

"It's all very well to sympathize with the working man," William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, once remarked. "But we get our money from the other side, and we can't afford to offend them."

* * *

This feels like the right place to mention how much I regret the loss of Molly Ivins, who over and over showed us the meaning of toughness and compassion, to say nothing of fun. She is already deeply missed. ■

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ARTICLES

LOCKDOWN IN GREELEY

How Immigration Raids Terrorized a Colorado Town

BY MARC COOPER

Greeley, Colorado

On the northern edge of this frozen-over city of 90,000 halfway between Denver and Cheyenne, Swift & Co.'s beef processing plant squats like a windowless concrete bunker alongside the snow-covered railroad tracks. The winter air hangs heavy with the stench of animal waste. And the three strings of barbed wire atop the chain-link fence that girdles the facility give the hulking complex all the appeal of some forsaken, remote prison. Nevertheless, the steam snaking high and gently from the plant's smokestacks has for several decades served as a beacon of hope and promise for thousands of immigrants, mostly Mexican, who have come north looking for a better life.

Working on the meatpacking floor can be a grueling, monotonous, dangerous routine, making thousands of the same cuts or swipes every day, and annual injury and illness rates might run 25 percent or more, but a union job with a wage of $12–$13 an hour, enough to support a family, seems worth the pain and risk.

At least until December 12, the holiday celebrating the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe. What materialized in front of the Swift gates that morning was more like a vision of hell. Shortly after 7 AM a half-dozen buses rolled up with a small fleet of government vans, which unloaded dozens of heavily armed federal agents backed by riot-clad local police. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents sealed off all entrances and exits and formed a perimeter around the factory. Then others barged inside and started rounding up the whole workforce.

Some of the frightened workers jumped into cattle pens; others hid behind machinery or in closets. Those who tried to run were wrestled to the ground. Sworn statements by some workers allege that the ICE agents used chemical sprays to subdue those who didn't understand the orders barked at them in English. The plant's entire workforce was herded into the cafeteria and separated into two groups: those who claimed to be US citizens or legal residents and those who didn't.

While the Greeley plant was being locked down, more than 1,000 ICE agents simultaneously raided five other Swift factories in Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, Utah and Minnesota. By the end of the day, nearly 1,300 immigrant workers had been taken into custody—about 265 of them from Greeley. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff boasted that the combined raids amounted to the largest workplace enforcement action in history. ICE Assistant Secretary Julie Myers would later claim that Operation Wagon Train, as the raids were dubbed, dealt a major blow in the "war against illegal immigration."

Now critics of the raids—workers, union reps, clergy, community leaders, policy analysts and lawyers—wonder what the high-profile sweep accomplished other than to traumatize a few hundred Latino families and to cost Swift an estimated $30 million in lost production. If anything, it starkly reveals, once again, a federal immigration policy completely detached from economic and social realities and a Bush White House incapable of moving ahead with much-promised reform. "What has changed because of all this?" rhetorically asks Francisco Granados, a Greeley businessman and volunteer providing relief services to the affected families. "Nothing. *Nada*. The whole system is set up to make you lie."

There was one new twist in the December 12 action that distinguished it from earlier headline-making sweeps. Homeland Security and ICE claimed the raids were triggered by a federal probe into identity-theft rings. Eventually, about 240 workers were hit with criminal charges, mostly involving the use of a false or stolen Social Security number. But that meant the other thousand or so detained workers were held only on immigration violations, undermining the identity-theft rationale for the roundup.

"By saying these raids were about identity theft, ICE and the Bush Administration suddenly changed the rules of the game," says Mark Grey, director of the Iowa Center for Immigrant Leadership and Integration. By highlighting the identity-theft angle, DHS officials have cast into a sinister light a common practice, at worst a victimless crime. The undocumented workers caught up in the sweep weren't using other identities to run up

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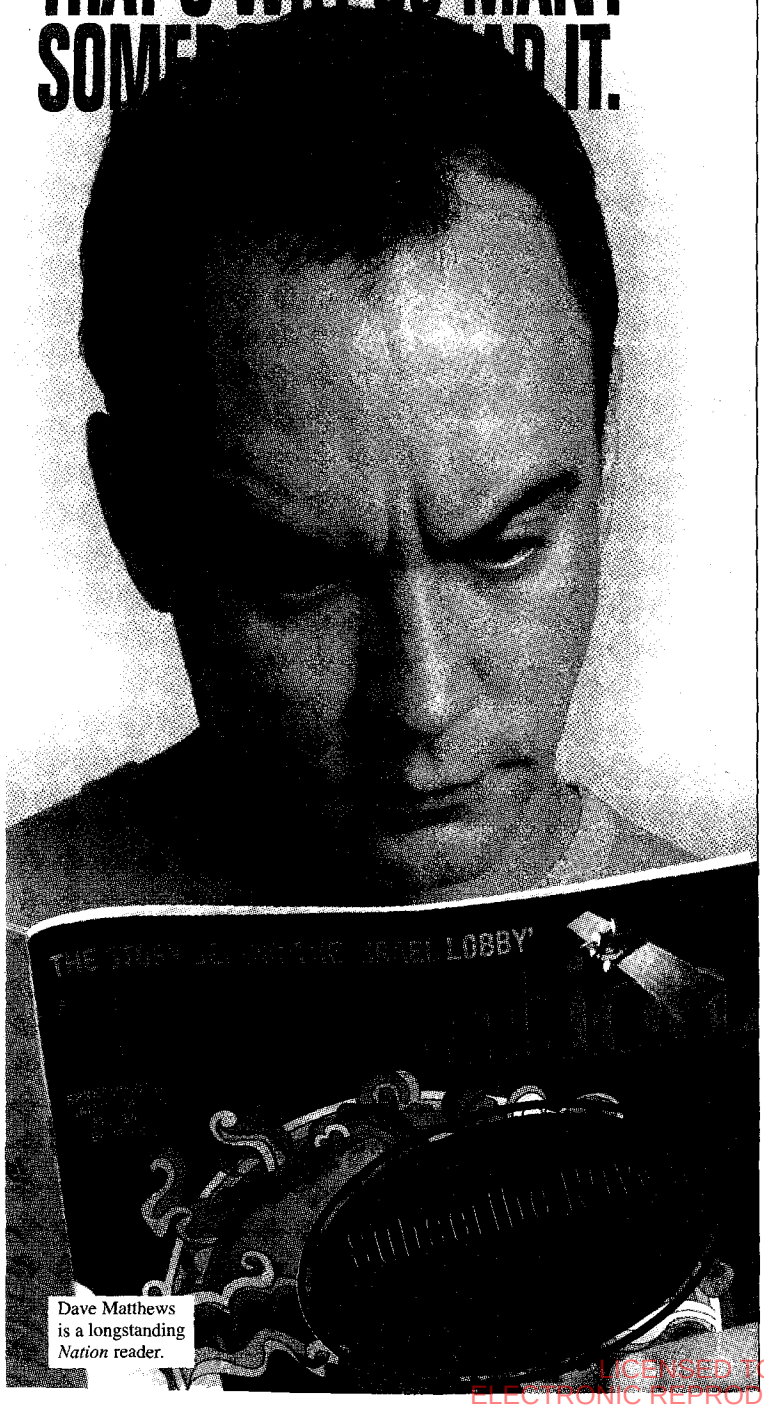

Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

someone's credit card bill or push someone into financial ruin but to collect their own paychecks, since they had used others' Social Security numbers to get on payroll. Says Grey: "The game until now has been an elaborate choreography among the employers who need the immigrant workers, the immigrants who want these jobs, the communities who need them, the cattlemen who depend on them and the government whose basic motto has been: Don't ask, don't tell."

Swift, whose headquarters are here in Greeley, tried unsuccessfully to head off the raids after company records were subpoenaed by ICE last spring. In early December company lawyers were denied a court injunction against the raids. For the past decade, Swift has used the government's Basic Pilot program, which supposedly verifies the validity of each new employee's Social Security number. But the program doesn't catch a number used by multiple individuals. Swift, then, played "the game" and so was ready, on the day of the raid, to issue a statement saying the arrests "violate the agreements" with the government "and raise serious questions as to the government's possible violation of individual workers' civil rights."

What nobody, including ICE, can answer is why, if the real targets were those people with stolen Social Security numbers, federal officials didn't go quietly into the Swift factories and, armed with warrants, simply arrest the suspects. Why the brash paramilitary operation? "I'll tell you why," says an indignant Robert McCormick, a Greeley immigration attorney representing about sixteen of the workers. "This is indeed a declaration of war on the immigrant community. This is about Republicans trying to appease their core bloc of supporters. Yeah, some people got a big kick out of this. But I think most Americans were revolted by it. Here in town, a lot of people have said they want no part of it. And others, I assure you, are going to wind up being very ashamed of it."

When I arrive in Greeley about three weeks after the raids, the entire town seems engulfed by cross-cutting emotions of bewilderment, fear, anger and resolve. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7, the union that represents the Greeley workers and called the level of the force "totally outrageous," has been struggling to provide minimal legal and humanitarian assistance for those detained and the families left behind. "We still don't know where everybody is. There's still people popping up here and there in different detention centers," says burly Fernando Rodriquez, a director of Local 7, during an interview in his small downtown office. "Things are still chaotic."

Spurred by a lawsuit brought by Rodriquez's union, Denver Federal Judge John Kane found that a month after the raids, ICE had yet to disclose a comprehensive list of exactly who had been detained and where they were being held—or whether they had already been summarily deported. On January 12 he ordered ICE to disclose the whereabouts of all 262 Greeley detainees within ten days. "There are people in custody—there is an urgency to this," an angry Judge Kane told ICE lawyers. ICE finally complied with the court order in late January.

The aggressiveness of the arrests and what followed have

Marc Cooper, a Nation *contributing editor, is a visiting professor and associate director at USC's Annenberg Institute for Justice and Journalism.*

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startled many. "I was amazed by the force used, by the heavy armament," says Democratic State Representative James Riesberg. "Amazed that so many didn't have the bond hearings they were owed, that so many were held without their location disclosed."

When news of the raids broke, Rodriquez entered the plant but ICE officials prohibited him from getting personal information from the workers to pass on to their families. "ICE treated the workers like animals," he says. "Didn't let people eat or drink anything. Didn't let them go to the bathroom. Wouldn't let workers use phones to make arrangements for kids in school or at home." He adds, "This was something you think you might see on TV, but never did I imagine I would actually live through it."

The Greeley Latino community, about 35 percent of the population, was not totally unprepared for the disaster. Political events of the previous year had spurred community organization and generated vibrant new leadership. As word of the raid flashed on local Spanish-language radio, hundreds of worried family members and protesters converged on the factory gates. Local police mobilized to keep the crowd at bay as their loved ones were handcuffed and loaded by ICE into waiting buses. The militarized sweep hit the community like a hurricane, says 33-year-old Sylvia Martinez, one of Greeley's most prominent new Latino activists. "It's frightening to see the power that the federal government has to blow through here and leave a shambles," she says as we eat lunch at one of the town's many Mexican restaurants. "This has been our Katrina, a man-made Katrina. There's no information, no accountability."

As I speak with Martinez, we're joined by a number of relief volunteers, all of whom express something between red-hot anger and sullen resignation over the way, as they see it, they were abandoned by the government. As ICE carted away hundreds of workers, no federal or local official stayed behind to respond to questions, offer any information or deal with shattered families. "Just this morning I was with a 16-year-old Guatemalan boy who came here two months ago with his mother. Now she's been taken away and is detained in Texas," says volunteer Laura Zuniga. "He doesn't speak English, he barely speaks Spanish, and he's been living with people who share his apartment. He's in shock. And there's no one, really no one, in charge."

Swift donated $60,000 to the local United Way. But local activists say too much of the charity money is tied up in red tape. They also cite a lack of solidarity with the detained workers and their families. The local union, they say, hasn't been easy to deal with, and the national labor movement has shown little support.

"The Swift raids are a troubling example of the way enforcement is being increased," says Ana Avendaño, associate general counsel of the AFL-CIO's immigrant worker program. "But, no, we didn't put out any statement on the raids, because [the food workers' union] didn't ask us for anything." That union has affiliated with the new Change to Win coalition—a breakaway from the AFL-CIO—and while both federations support comprehensive immigration reform they have not agreed on a common strategy. "We did feel we were left out there by ourselves in the first couple days," says a national official of the food workers' union. "But then the hotel workers and Change to Win came in with a strong statement of support."

Elected Democratic officials—who now hold the Colorado

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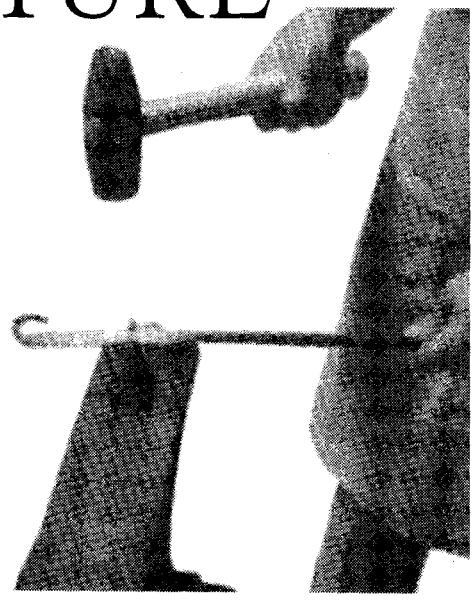
FORGING A RADICAL POLITICAL FUTURE



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Statehouse and a majority in the legislature—have not offered much significant support. "In Colorado," says Sylvia Martinez, "the politicians think it would be political suicide to support these workers." Just last summer, in a special session of the legislature, state Democrats tried to one-up then–GOP Governor Bill Owens in passing a slate of tough anti-immigrant legislation. "Our Democrats have been as unhelpful as the Republicans on the immigration issues," says Lindsey Hodel, field director for the Colorado Progressive Coalition. State Representative Riesberg, who convened a community forum on the Greeley raids in late January and who supports liberalized immigration reform, readily concedes that the prevailing political atmosphere makes it hard for Democrats to speak out. "The people of Colorado have made it clear they want the law to be enforced and are saying, 'What part of illegal don't you understand?'" he says. "But I'm concerned that some of those feelings are based on disinformation."

'In Colorado, the politicians think it would be political suicide to support these workers.' —Sylvia Martinez, Greeley activist

The vacuum left by elected officials has been filled by new grassroots groups like Martinez's Latinos Unidos and their most reliable ally, Father Bernie Schmitz of Our Lady of Peace church. The 59-year-old bespectacled priest has stepped forward as an ardent advocate and defender of the immigrant workers who make up the bulk of his congregation. His church and its social network have become the command center of community relief and have so far raised more than $80,000 in contributions. Family members left behind by the raids can turn to the union and Padre Bernie, as he's called, to pay the utility bills. A food center funded by donations made through the church provides boxes of food for anyone who walks in the door.

On the one-month anniversary of the raids, Father Schmitz organized an interfaith mass that drew dozens on a bitterly cold, snowy weeknight. "Let us pray for the migrant workers," he told those who attended. "Let us who benefit from their labor be grateful to them for what they provide and let us welcome them." In an interview after the mass, Father Schmitz confirms that while his church has been coordinating relief and tending to divided families, he has yet to be contacted by any official from ICE or any other federal agency. "Not that I'd necessarily want to speak to them," he says with a smile.

At a cake and punch reception that evening in the church basement, I meet two middle-aged brothers from Guatemala's western countryside. They speak to me in a Spanish heavily accented with their indigenous Quiché. Another brother and the 22-year-old son of one of them were caught in the raid and now languish with sixty other Guatemalans in an El Paso detention center. Judge Kane ordered them returned to Colorado so they can be assisted by counsel and allowed to post bond, but instead they were held for weeks out of state. "We can't go back to Totonicapán," says Rosalio, referring to the Guatemalan department a lot of them come from. He's been working in Colorado for ten years but has no legal papers. "Back there it's full of organized crime, drug traffickers and injustice." He goes on, "And injustice here as well. It's been very difficult seeing our families taken away from work for no other crime than working."

No one I speak to in Greeley—not Father Schmitz, not Sylvia Martinez, not even the Guatemalans themselves—can tell me of any local Guatemalan leaders, any activists or representatives. All anybody knows is that there are several hundred Guatemalans in town and now dozens of them in jail.

Greeley was founded in 1870 as an experimental farming community organized by Nathan Meeker, the agricultural editor of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*. By the 1920s the almost uniformly WASP community had grown the area into one of America's most important sugar beet providers. During World War II, German and Austrian POWs housed nearby were used to help tend to the profitable crops. Mexican braceros were also imported to take the place of local men drafted into the war. Cattle processing on a mass scale had come to town by the 1960s. And as the meatpacking industry went through its own labor revolution in the 1980s and '90s—breaking some traditional unions, automating and downgrading much of the workforce to less-skilled, lower-paid positions—the local plant became a magnet for Mexican and Central American migrants.

Like many other mountain and Midwestern cities experiencing similar "browning," Greeley was until recently making an uneasy cultural transition. The more middle-class Anglos, some commuting to Denver to high-tech jobs, live on the manicured west side of town. The newer, darker immigrant population has mushroomed in the grittier eastern and northern neighborhoods. Jerry's Market, founded by German immigrants, soon added a *taquería*, while *carnicerías* and *tortillerías* appeared on the edge of downtown. The *Greeley Tribune* started publishing a weekly supplement in Spanish. Latinos still had no political representation, but racial conflict was submerged.

Greeley and surrounding Weld County, however, have the misfortune of being a GOP stronghold in an increasingly Democratic state, and thus are vulnerable to hardball partisan manipulation. In the fall of 2005 the politically ambitious county DA, Ken Buck (a Republican married to the current state GOP vice chair), joined forces with Republican US Senator Wayne Allard and conservative US Representative Marilyn Musgrave in proposing that ICE open a local office in Greeley. The trio saw political opportunity in linking illegal immigration to rising crime rates and argued that bringing the immigration cops into Greeley would restore order. The tone for such racially tinged politicking had already been established by fellow Colorado US Representative Tom Tancredo, who built his political profile (and now intends to run for President) on a hard-line anti-immigration position.

"Before the raids, I think we were all trying to move toward some sort of adjustment," says Sylvia Martinez. "But that all changed when Ken Buck made his move." The county commission, without public debate, approved Buck's proposal for a local ICE office. As the measure moved forward, the Latino community began to stir. Longtime Chicano activists and 1960s veterans Priscilla Falcon and Ricardo Romero put together some protest meetings, which soon swelled in size, frequency and intensity. New leaders, including Martinez, emerged.

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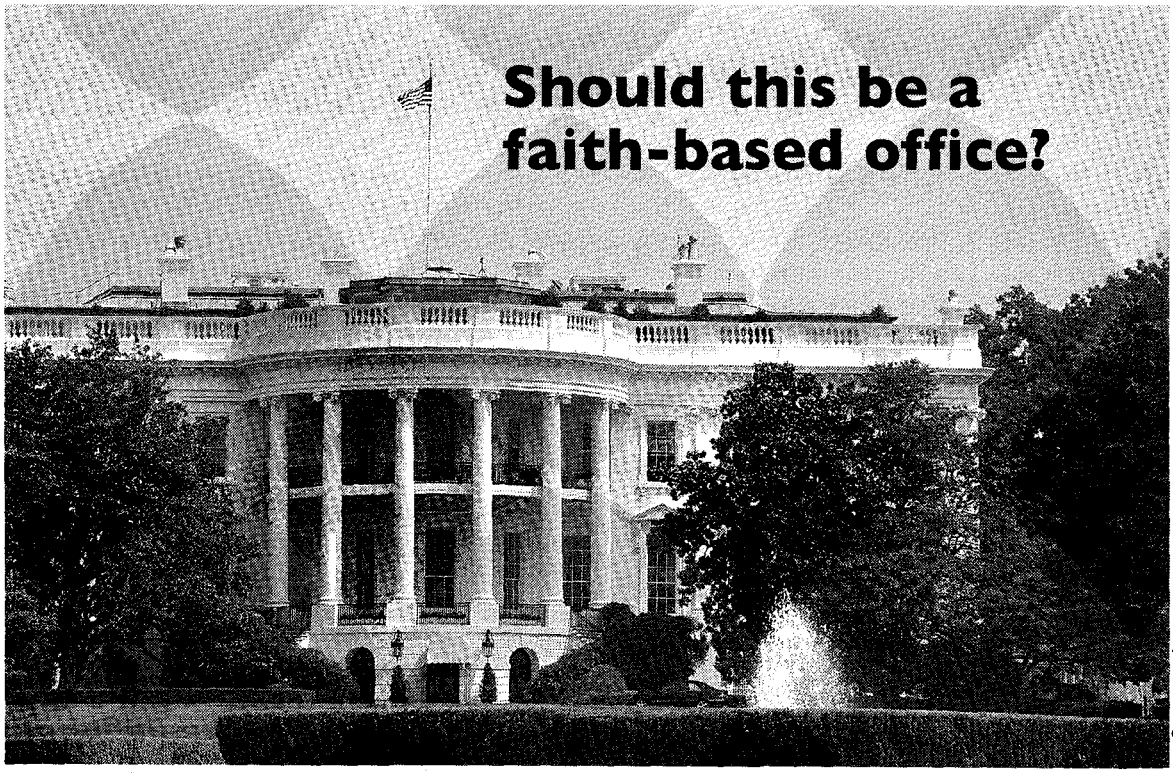

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The Montana-born daughter of Tex-Mex farmworkers, Martinez had worked the fields in her youth and worked her way up to serving as an investigator for the local public defender. While she followed local politics, she didn't get involved until Buck's proposal for the ICE office. "I thought I would be a coward if I didn't stand up against it," she says. As many as 600 people opposed the proposal when it came before the City Council in late 2005. The council punted, and it was scrapped. Local Latino power had won its first victory.

Once again, as the response to the December raids continues to build, that same sort of rising political energy is being felt. "All this stuff has made one great change," says Mexican-born radio announcer Elda Gamez, who became the community's electronic voice as she went live on the air during the day of the raid. "That change is unity. We were hit with a very low blow, but it served us well, and we've gotten support from people we've never heard from before." Father Schmitz is equally optimistic. "This has put a face on the issue," he says. "It's no longer abstract."

What drives that optimism, even in the midst of the current turmoil, is a sense of inevitability. The local migrants, their families and advocates know they are riding the tide of a global economic and demographic wave more powerful than any fleeting enforcement or political gesture. "ICE might think it has changed the rules, but the real game here is supply and demand," says Mark Grey. "This industry and several others would collapse if you removed the immigrant workers. There is simply no going back. The only solution is comprehensive immigration reform which recognizes these realities."

The Clinton Administration carried out similar immigration raids on the meatpacking industry between 1992 and 1997. But that didn't put a crimp in the northward flow of migrants. For millions of Mexicans, the march across the border is a forced exodus, as a couple from Guanajuato tell me when I sit with them in their cramped, drafty trailer in a mobile home park in Greeley. I'll call them Domingo and Emilia; both are in their early 30s. Domingo, an undocumented Swift worker since 2001, was picked up in the December raid, briefly jailed in El Paso and then dumped across the border into Juárez. After a quick trip to see his extended family in Guanajuato, he put together $2,000, paid a coyote and, along with seven other deported Swift workers from his hometown, dodged the Border Patrol and trudged across the Arizona desert back into the United States. He arrived in his Greeley trailer exactly twenty-two days after he'd been arrested.

"I walked for three days and three nights. I was already diabetic, but now I think my leg is ruined," he says, massaging his shin. "But I would do it again tomorrow. And tomorrow and the next day," he says, nodding toward his 3-year-old son, who's running on the threadbare rug in Spiderman pajamas. The boy is a US citizen, as is his 1-year-old sister. Their 8-year-old sister, poring over her homework at the tiny dining table, is not.

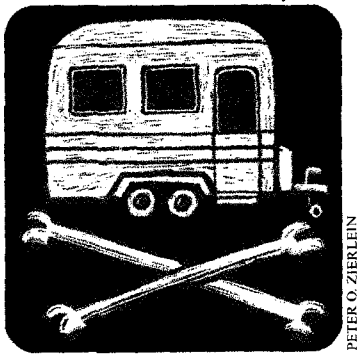
Domingo says that from the moment he was detained, he was determined to come back. He knows he can't return to Swift, where he made $12.75 an hour, but he also knows he can't take his family back to Mexico. "There is no work there," he says. The union paid the couple's gas and light bill and gave Emilia a food card worth $50. But no more aid is available, and the family is five days late on the $389 monthly trailer rent. Emilia says the only option to be discarded is returning to Mexico. "This country may not be our country, but it is the country of opportunity," she says, hugging her husband. "This isn't for us. We are Mexicans. This is for them. The children. They are the Americans." ■

KATRINA SURVIVORS ARE FINDING NEW HEALTH PERILS IN THEIR FEMA-SUPPLIED TRAILERS.

Dying for a Home

AMANDA SPAKE

Along the Gulf Coast, in the towns and fishing villages from New Orleans to Mobile, survivors of Hurricane Katrina are suffering from a constellation of similar health problems. They wake up wheezing, coughing and gasping for breath. Their eyes burn; their heads ache; they feel tired, lethargic. Nosebleeds are common, as are sinus infections and asthma attacks. Children and seniors are most severely afflicted, but no one is immune.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

There's one other similarity: The people suffering from these illnesses live in trailers supplied by the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

An estimated 275,000 Americans are living in more than 102,000 travel trailers and mobile homes that FEMA purchased after Hurricane Katrina. The price tag for the trailers was more than $2.6 billion, according to FEMA. Despite their cost of about $15,000 each, most are camperlike units, designed for overnight stays. Even if the best materials had been used in their construction—and that is a point of debate—they would not be appropriate for full-time living, according to experts on mobile homes. The interiors are fabricated from composite wood, particle board and other materials that emit formaldehyde, a common but toxic chemical.

"Formaldehyde is a very powerful irritant," says Mary DeVany, an industrial hygienist in Vancouver, Washington. "When you inhale the vapors...the breathing passages close off." The Inter-

Amanda Spake is a Katrina Media Fellow and contributing editor to U.S. News and World Report. *Research for this story was supported by the Open Society Institute.*

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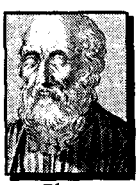
Plato

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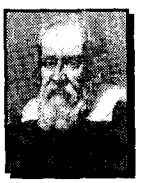
Galileo

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Ever since the dawn of civilization, certain crucial questions have preoccupied thoughtful people: What is the purpose of life? What is the best kind of life? Who or what is God? How can we tell truth from falsehood? What is the essence of justice? When is it legitimate for one person to have power over others? Can these questions even be answered?

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national Agency for Research on Cancer has classified formaldehyde as a human carcinogen. The Environmental Protection Agency has said that more than 0.1 parts per million of formaldehyde in air can cause eye, lung and nose irritation. Few scientists dispute the chemical's power to worsen respiratory health. Yet there is no federal standard for formaldehyde in indoor air, or for travel trailers, and no consensus on whether any "safe" level exists.

Last summer FEMA began distributing a leaflet to trailer residents explaining that the materials used in the interiors can release toxic vapors. The agency suggests residents keep windows and doors open and the air conditioner on, yet reduce heat and humidity. (The Gulf's hot, humid climate increases the rate at which materials release formaldehyde.)

FEMA has not responded to requests for the total number of complaints it has received about formaldehyde—some media reports put the number at forty-six. The agency does say that seventeen trailers in Louisiana had to be replaced because of the chemical.

There is no federal standard for formaldehyde in indoor air, or for travel trailers, and no consensus on whether any 'safe' level exists.

Many residents suffering from symptoms, however, are afraid to complain to FEMA, fearing the agency will take away the only housing they can afford. It was complaints of respiratory problems to the Sierra Club that led the organization to test fifty-two FEMA trailers last April, June and July. Some 83 percent of the thirteen different types tested had formaldehyde in the indoor air at levels above the EPA recommended limit.

Air sampling by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at holding stations where groups of trailers were kept before they were set up revealed high formaldehyde levels even in outdoor air. At the holding station in Pass Christian, Mississippi, formaldehyde in outdoor air was thirty to fifty times the level recommended by the EPA, and several times OSHA's workplace standard.

One of the first to notice an unusual number of illnesses among trailer residents was pediatrician Scott Needle of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. "I was seeing kids and families coming in with repeated, prolonged respiratory illnesses—sinus infections, lingering coughs, viral infections that didn't go away," Needle says. The mothers told him that their children had never been sick like this before. Some of the infants had to be hospitalized. "Over the course of three months, I saw several dozen families with these health problems. That's really high, and this isn't something I'd seen in my practice before. All of them were living in FEMA trailers."

Angela Orcut, a preschool teacher, and her 3-year-old son, Nicholas, are typical of Needle's patients. "Ever since we've lived in this trailer, Nickie wakes up every morning choking and coughing," Orcut says. "He's had so many sinus infections since we moved in here." At night, when the family returns to the closed-up trailer, "the smell burns our noses and our eyes," she says.

Like many trailer residents, Orcut has not filed a complaint with FEMA. "I'm afraid if I complain, they'll take the trailer away," she says. "Then where will we live?"

Paul and Melody Stewart have a similar story to tell about their health problems, which began shortly after moving into a FEMA trailer at the site of their storm-ravaged house. "When we got here, it smelled bad," says Paul, a former Waveland, Mississippi, policeman. Melody woke up the first night they stayed in the trailer, gasping for air. "Within a week," he says, "we both had nosebleeds."

One morning the Stewarts found their cherished pet cockatiel lethargic and unable to stand. They rushed the bird to the vet, who said the cockatiel would die if he were kept in the trailer. Stewart began doing research and discovered that the wood products used to make cabinets, walls and other interior parts could emit formaldehyde, especially in hot, humid climates.

He bought a testing kit for airborne contaminants and sent it back for analysis. In winter, with windows open and the air conditioner on, the test showed, the formaldehyde level in the Stewarts' trailer was more than two times the EPA's limit. Still, FEMA refused to replace the trailer until a story about the Stewarts' formaldehyde problems ran on the local television news. FEMA called the next day to say they were bringing a new trailer.

When the new trailer arrived, the couple could smell formaldehyde before they opened the door. Another was delivered with mold covering the walls. The Stewarts lived in their truck until they took what remained of their insurance settlement and their retirement savings to buy a new trailer at a dealer's lot. This one was made with low-formaldehyde-emitting materials. Their respiratory problems are gone, but plans to rebuild their home are on hold.

Hilda Nelson, 75, of Coden, Alabama, was not as lucky as the Stewarts. When she moved into a FEMA trailer at the site of her former house, she was in good health, says her son, Paul. Three weeks later, he says, "she was having trouble breathing." Not long after, she was diagnosed with pneumonia, then congestive heart failure, a chronic illness that can cause breathing difficulties.

In June 2006 Paul Nelson ordered a kit to test his mother's trailer for formaldehyde. The results showed the level of the chemical inside her trailer was 50 percent over the EPA's recommended limit.

Scientists familiar with toxics agree that elderly people, like infants, are highly susceptible to the hazards of formaldehyde, particularly if they have underlying illnesses. "We started testing in Alabama," explains Becky Gillette, co-chair of the Mississippi Sierra Club, "because we got reports from social workers there that so many elderly people living in the trailers were being hospitalized for respiratory conditions. And many of them were dying."

In October 2006, at the age of 76, Hilda Nelson died, one year and one month after moving into her FEMA trailer. Doctors "never had an answer" as to why her health deteriorated so quickly, says her son. "But I have my suspicions. I point the finger at the formaldehyde."

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When Katrina hit, the federal government had standing contracts with a number of companies to provide goods and services during natural disasters, including firms that manufacture, haul, set up and maintain temporary housing. Given the unprecedented number of people displaced by Katrina, FEMA contracted with the major trailer makers, such as Gulf Stream Coach, Fleetwood Enterprises, Monaco Coach and others, to provide more than 100,000 travel trailers. Only 14,000 of them were standard trailers, purchased "off the lot" from retail dealers.

The majority were stripped-down models, described as "no frills units" by the marketing director of Gulf Stream, which landed a $521 million contract to make 50,000 trailers for FEMA. "We gave them the time schedule to produce the trailers," explains James McIntyre, a FEMA spokesperson. "They hired new staff or whatever they needed to do to meet the schedule."

Trailer manufacturers set up ad hoc assembly lines, advertised in local newspapers and hired temporary workers to fill FEMA orders at breakneck speed. On some assembly lines, workers say, they were expected to produce a trailer in eight to ten minutes. Twelve-hour shifts and six-day workweeks were common. "Under the best of conditions, some trailer manufacturers do not really have good quality control," says Connie Gallant, president of the RV Consumer Group, a nonprofit that rates the quality of mobile housing and trailers. "In a mass production frenzy, that quality control pretty much goes out the window."

One critical quality-control question concerns the construction materials used in the trailers. Many American composite wood and particle-board makers produce low-formaldehyde-emitting materials. In Indiana, where Gulf Stream and a number of other trailer firms are located, companies were scrambling to find enough construction materials. Scientists and housing experts believe that the materials used to fabricate the FEMA trailers may have been imported from countries that produce high-formaldehyde-emitting particle board and composite woods.

"The levels of formaldehyde that have been reported down there you don't see in the average American-made mobile home," says Thad Godish, a professor of environmental management at Ball State University, in Indiana. Godish, an expert on indoor air pollution, has consulted on some 350 lawsuits involving formaldehyde in mobile homes.

A class-action lawsuit was filed against FEMA and some trailer manufacturers in Louisiana in June on behalf of residents suffering from respiratory and flu-like illnesses they attribute to formaldehyde inside their trailers. Sean Trundy, an attorney for the plaintiffs, says that after he filed the lawsuit, several Indiana workers, hired temporarily by the trailer makers, contacted him. They had come down with similar illnesses while working on the trailers.

"One complained that his ears ruptured and bled. Many had nosebleeds, headaches and flu-like symptoms. Some were coughing up blood," says Trundy, who plans to call them as witnesses as the residents' case progresses. "They told me some wood products came from Africa. The longer they continued to produce FEMA trailers, the worse the materials got. Apparently the manufacturer's regular suppliers could not keep up with demand." Trundy hired an independent testing lab in Pennsylvania to evaluate some plaintiffs' trailers. Formaldehyde levels in the living room of one were more than three times the EPA's limit, according to the lab's report. The Pennsylvania lab recommended that "residents should move from the affected dwellings until formaldehyde levels can be lowered."

Gulf Stream Coach, the firm that supplied the largest number of trailers for evacuees, did not return calls asking for comment on formaldehyde or the materials used in trailers made for FEMA. A spokesperson for Fleetwood Enterprises, one of the large trailer makers, said she could not comment on the formaldehyde issue because the lawsuit against the company is in litigation.

'What is the problem with testing the trailers that people are living in?'
—pediatrician Scott Needle

Keith Broom, the spokesperson for the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, says that manufacturers have told his organization that they generally use low-formaldehyde-emitting materials in trailers. "I do know that there are engineered wood products used that come from China," Broom adds, but he's not sure which were used in the FEMA trailers. Even if imported materials that release high levels of formaldehyde were used, says air expert Thad Godish, "it's perfectly legal, because there are no standards."

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has set standards to limit formaldehyde in building materials used in manufactured housing and mobile homes. But for travel trailers and recreational vehicles there is no federal standard. One reason, says the RV Consumer Group's Gallant, is that travel trailers are intended only for short trips, not full-time living. But FEMA's James McIntyre says that travel trailers "have traditionally been used in disasters for temporary housing." He adds, "Cost is one factor." A mobile home for full-time use costs in excess of $30,000, but a travel trailer is half that, or less.

Whatever specifications FEMA may have set for trailer manufacturers regarding formaldehyde, they have not been made public. In Congressional hearings last February, Richard Skinner, the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security, testified that some trailer contracts "did not specify minimum specifications requirements, making it possible that some trailers...had significant deficiencies." Even those made according to specifications, Skinner said, were accepted by FEMA "without any formal inspection procedures."

FEMA has now undertaken testing of its trailers. At FEMA's request, the EPA recently sampled air in ninety-six unoccupied trailers that FEMA calls comparable to those used by Katrina evacuees, and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are analyzing the results.

But Bay St. Louis pediatrician Scott Needle questions this approach. "What is the problem with testing the trailers that people are living in?" he asks. He tried to convince the Mississippi Department of Health and the CDC to do an independent study

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on the illnesses. The state, he says, told him, "We don't have anyone to spare right now." The CDC agreed that such a study would be a good idea, he says, but the federal agency has to be asked to help by the state. Mississippi hasn't asked.

For its part, the Mississippi Department of Health says it "does not have statutory authority to regulate indoor air quality, including formaldehyde within travel trailers." Needle says he wasn't asking for regulation, just investigation. The department, however, says it never received his request for an investigation.

Last month FEMA agreed that those displaced by Katrina could remain in their trailers until August of this year. That's six months longer than the eighteen months mandated by federal law. No one expects this to be long enough. Very little new or affordable housing is being built on the Gulf Coast, and prices and rents for existing homes have skyrocketed because of the short supply.

Though $388 million was awarded to five states in December to design new model homes for use after disasters, survivors of the next storm are more likely to benefit. It seems clear that many Katrina evacuees living in FEMA trailers will be in them for months, if not years.

Democratic Representatives Henry Waxman and Charlie Melancon wrote to R. David Paulison, director of FEMA, last summer, asking about the formaldehyde-emitting materials used in the trailers and steps being taken to prevent exposure. John D'Araujo, FEMA's director of recovery, responded by describing the leaflet the agency distributes about ventilation, and noted its agreement with the EPA to test some unoccupied trailers. No test results or new recommendations have been released.

Waxman has not decided whether to hold hearings on the formaldehyde issue, but he's not giving up on it. "I remain concerned that many evacuees have been and continue to be exposed to hazardous levels of formaldehyde gas in their FEMA-issued trailers," he says. "And I hope that FEMA will be more responsive to the new Congress." ■

EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

to be a leading concern of ordinary Afghans.

I also took issue with Jones's statement that during the 1980s war against the Soviets, "the CIA went on training those 'Arab-Afghan' Islamic jihadis in Pakistani camps at a cost of about $800 million." There is simply no evidence for this. The laundry list of CIA screw-ups is well-known, but training the Arab Afghans, the most militant of whom went on to become the core of Al Qaeda, is not one of them.

The view that the CIA trained the "Arab Afghans"—Muslims from around the world drawn to the Afghan jihad against the Soviets—is a misunderstanding of how the war against the Soviets was funded by the agency. For reasons of "plausible deniability" the CIA handed around $3 billion during the 1980s to Pakistan's ISI to fund the Afghan mujahedeen. Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, who ran ISI's Afghan operation between 1983 and '87, explains in his book *The Bear Trap* how this arrangement worked:

"The foremost function of the CIA was to spend money. It was always galling to the Americans...that although they paid the piper they could not call the tune. The CIA supported the mujahideen by spending the taxpayers' money, billions of dollars of it over the years, on buying arms, ammunition, and equipment. It was their secret arms procurement branch that was kept busy. It was, however, a cardinal rule of Pakistan's policy that no Americans ever become involved with the distribution of funds or arms once they arrived in the country. No Americans ever trained or had direct contact with the mujahideen, and no American official ever went inside Afghanistan."

In short, the CIA had very limited dealings with the Afghan mujahedeen, let alone with the Arab Afghans who attached themselves to the various mujahedeen factions. Meanwhile, the Arab Afghans had their own sources of funding and had no need of CIA money. Thanks to his connections to rich Saudis, the Saudi royal family and his own fortune, Osama bin Laden became the main financier of the Arab Afghans. Moreover, bin Laden was hostile to the United States because of its support of Israel. Palestinian journalist Jamal Ismail recalls meeting bin Laden in Pakistan in 1984: He "was not willing to drink any soft drinks from American companies, Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Sprite, 7-Up... trying to boycott all American products because he believes that without Americans Israel cannot exist."

Since 9/11 Al Qaeda insiders have responded to the erroneous assertions that the CIA backed the Arab Afghans. Al Qaeda's number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in his autobiographical *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet* writes, "The United States did not give one penny in aid to the [Arab] mujahideen. Is it possible that Osama bin Laden who...called for the boycott of US goods as a form of support for the Intifada in Palestine, is a US agent in Afghanistan?" In 2004 Al Qaeda ideologue Abu Mousab al Suri released *The International Islamic Resistance Call*, which explains, "It is a big lie that the Afghan Arabs were formed with the backing of the CIA.... Saudi intelligence agencies did have involvement with bin Laden, and elements of their apparatus did send assistance from Saudi Arabia."

Similarly, in its final report the 9/11 Commission concluded: "Bin Ladin understood... the extent to which the continuation and eventual success of the jihad in Afghanistan depended on an increasingly complex, almost worldwide organization. This organization included a financial support network that came to be known as the "Golden Chain," put together mainly by financiers in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states. Donations flowed through charities or other nongovernmental organizations. Bin Ladin and the "Afghan Arabs" drew largely on funds raised by this network.... Bin Ladin and his comrades had their own sources of support and training, and they received little or no assistance from the United States."

Thanks also to Derek Davis for his letter. Recent polling data in Afghanistan released by ABC News and the BBC help explain Afghan attitudes to some of the issues he raises. The poll results are worth quoting at some length, as they show that despite the real difficulties Afghanistan faces, ordinary Afghans continue to have positive feelings about the US-led occupation and their own government and lives:

"Sixty eight percent approve of Karzai's work—down from 83 percent last year, but still a level most national leaders would envy. Fifty-nine percent think the parliament is working for the benefit of the Afghan people—down from 77 percent, but still far better than Americans' ratings of the U.S. Congress.... Big majorities continue to call the U.S.-led invasion a good thing for their country (88 percent), to express a favorable opinion of the United States (74 percent) and to prefer the current Afghan government to Taliban rule (88 percent). Indeed eight in 10 Afghans support the presence of U.S., British and other international forces on their soil; that compares with five percent support for Taliban fighters.... Fifty-five percent of Afghans still say the country's going in the right direction, but that's down sharply from 77 percent last year. Whatever the problems, 74 percent say their living conditions today are better now than they were under the Taliban. That rating, however, is 11 points lower now than it was a year ago."

PETER BERGEN

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COMMENT

(*Continued From Page 6*)

tion, emeritus though I may be, would facilitate an audience with the man. (As it turned out, that was not to be; Chávez chose to attend Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's inauguration during our visit. I guess a head of state is entitled to his own priorities.)

We arrived in Caracas January 7, the day before Chávez announced his intention to reverse the privatizations carried out by previous governments in the telecommunications and utilities industries—which won him editorial denunciations in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. (If past practices are any precedent, nationalization under Chávez will be preceded by elaborate negotiations, and the owners will end up with a fair price—sort of the Venezuelan equivalent of a hostile takeover.) And we did get to see Lara and José Vicente Rangel, one of Chávez's closest confidants, still loyal despite being replaced as Vice President just before we arrived. We also saw the heads of most of the leading media companies, as well as various human rights and media monitoring types.

What did we conclude? Speaking for my non-Spanish-speaking self, I concluded I was right to have had qualms. No matter how much preparation I'd done or how much access we had, I found it impossible to assess the status of freedom of expression in six days, especially in the polarized environment we found. Example: On the one hand, the man from RCTV assured us the legal case is open and shut: Under the law they had a two-year window within which to apply for renewal of their concession; they filed a timely application, the government never got back to them, and therefore their concession was automatically renewed. On the government side, Lara cited RCTV's regular showing of what he called "pornographic" soap operas during children's viewing hours as one among many violations of the law of social responsibility.

Elides Rojas, editor in chief of *El Universal*, which has been called the *Wall Street Journal* of Venezuela, argues that the RCTV episode is phase four of a carefully planned "take-over": In phase one, Chávez attacked the credibility of opposition media and their owners; in phase two he attacked the media as agents of foreign powers; in phase three he attacked journalists by name; and in phase four he wants to take ownership—"RCTV is a clear case." Opposition journalists repeatedly mentioned lack of access, withholding of public advertising, content restrictions and countless defamation suits.

But talk to Eleazar Díaz Rangel, editor of *Ultimas Noticias*, generally regarded as a progovernment paper (although, he told me, a majority of its staff supported Chávez's opponent in the last election), and he'll tell you the nonrenewal of RCTV's concession is exactly what it appears to be: nonrenewal of a concession and nothing more. Or talk to Rangel, former Vice President, and he'll assure you, "We have more freedom of expression than ever before. Not a single journalist has been put in jail. Not a single journalist has been exiled or deported. No media have been expropriated or confiscated. RCTV politicized this. They use political arguments, because they don't really have legal ones." Or, as Teodoro Petkoff, editor of the satirical tabloid *Tal Cual*, a curmudgeonly anti-Chávez (but anti-coup) independent, put it, "The tycoons thought

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COMMENT

they owned the country, but Chávez outwitted them."

Our delegation decided that since everybody we talked to was focusing on RCTV that's where we, too, would put our focus. At the same time, we knew we didn't have enough facts to pass on the case. Were they involved in the coup against Chávez? Probably. However, was that grounds for revocation of a license or grounds for prosecuting them as coupsters when it happened? Did they break the law of social responsibility? Probably. And so, probably, did others, whose concessions were not revoked—at least not yet.

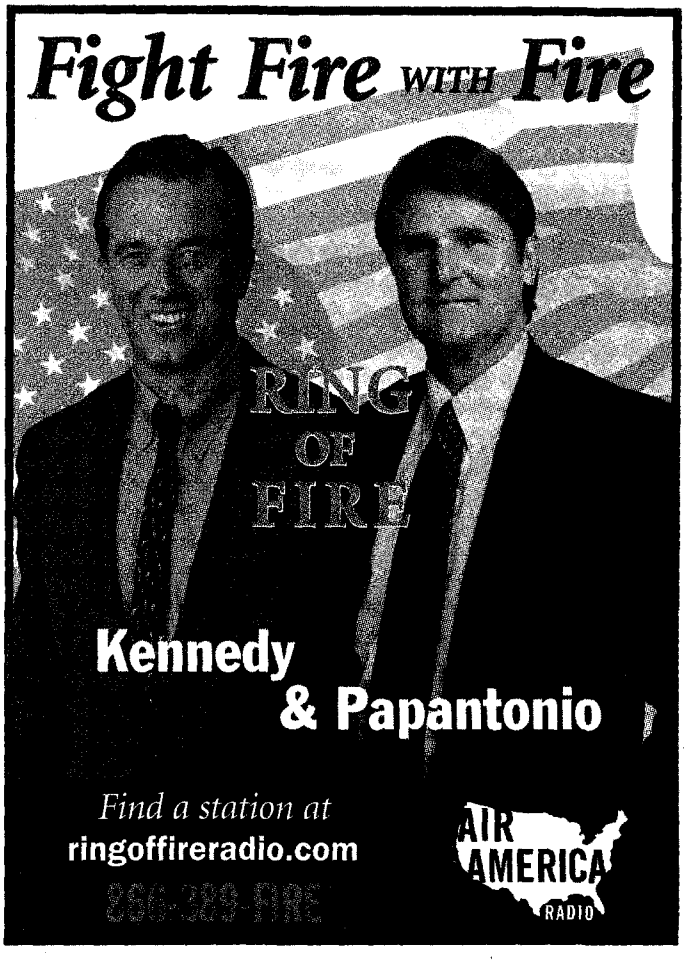
But we also decided that we *did* have enough facts to sound the alarm on the lack of transparency surrounding the decision not to renew RCTV's concession. Rangel told us that although Chávez had announced the decision in his own inimitable way, in fact it was the result of a long process. Where is the file that describes that process, and why has it not been made public? In our presence, Rangel called the man in charge of such matters and asked him to make it available to us, but somehow—if it exists—it never made its way into our hands. And so we drafted a press release and held a press conference where we revealed our preliminary finding and reported our consensus: that in the absence of a transparent, public process with clear criteria, the decision not to renew RCTV's license (or any other license) would have a chilling effect on free expression. Our "findings" appeared in all the local papers—pro and con the regime—and were carried live on TV.

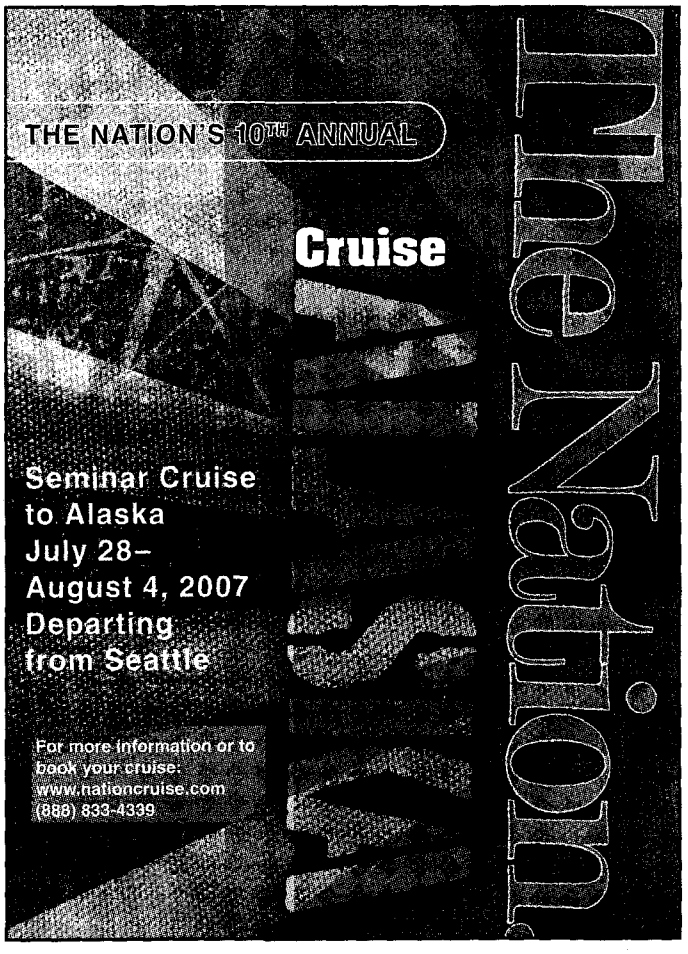
But for me, the most intriguing part of our mission was less what we found when we got there than the questions I left with. Was the decision not to renew RCTV's license merely the latest power grab of Caudillo Chávez, who will turn out, like Castro, to be tone-deaf to the requirements of free expression, or is it a sign that he is serious about his plan to empower the poor and will use his missions, decrees and revised laws to guarantee bottom-up, democratic access to and ownership of the various modes of communication? Should the socialist ideal of imbuing the people with democratic values be trumped by the civil liberties premise of no prior restraint? How does one reconcile "socialism in the twenty-first century" (surely a more noble aspiration than carrying forward the media concentration of the twentieth century) with the requirements of democracy?

If the Venezuelan telecommunications authority and Chávez accept the spirit of our delegation's recommendation, and the next time a concession comes up for renewal they announce open bidding with the goal of achieving true media diversity—stations owned by cooperatives, stations owned by communities, stations owned by public-private partnerships, stations like Telesur (already owned partly by Argentina and Uruguay along with Venezuela)—what will the bidding process look like? What will be the social criteria? And if they could really pull it off, wouldn't it be a better system than the one the United States itself has, which, for all our talk of free expression and granting licenses in "the public interest," seems almost always to result in the FCC granting automatic renewal of television licenses?

Opponents of the Chávez regime mock his talk of "socialism in the twenty-first century" as empty rhetoric. Perhaps at this stage it would be better to call it magical realism—still a fiction, but one to be nourished as an ideal to pursue rather than a policy to be mocked.

VICTOR NAVASKY





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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Thought Experimenter

JACKSON LEARS

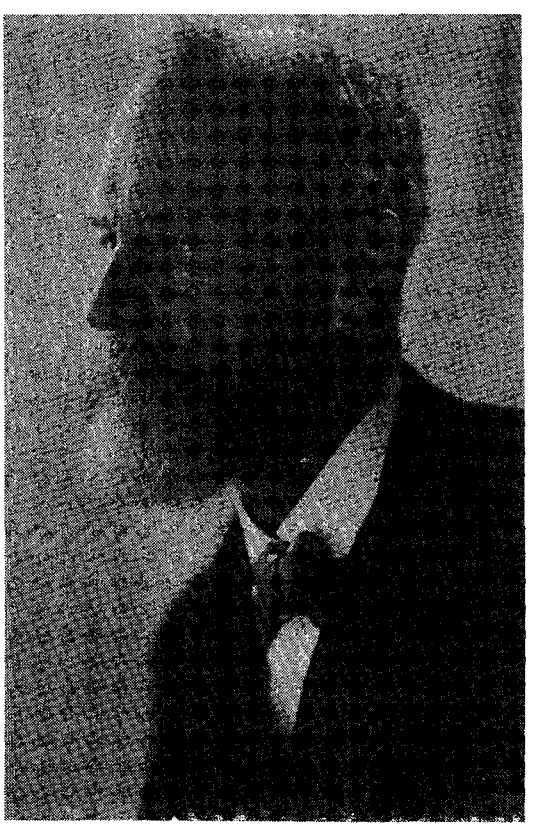
WILLIAM JAMES: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism.
By Robert D. Richardson.
Houghton Mifflin. 622 pp. $30.

Little more than a century ago, philosophers still raised fundamental questions to nonspecialist audiences. Consider the scene at the YMCA in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in April 1895, when an eager group gathered to hear Professor William James of the Harvard philosophy department ask: "Is Life Worth Living?" This scene is of course unimaginable today. For most educated professionals, such profoundly personal yet paradoxically universal matters have become unmentionable in public. But those ultimate questions will not go away.

William James made a brilliant career of asking them. On that April night in Cambridge, he was in top form. His reputation had soared since the publication in 1890 of his two-volume *Principles of Psychology*, which both established the academic legitimacy of the discipline and revolutionized many of its assumptions. His life was a blur of speaking engagements, occasional pieces for magazines and papers delivered at conferences—along with a full load of Harvard undergraduates. In three years he would be invited to give the Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh University, which would result in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Beyond *Varieties* lay his philosophical explorations in radical empiricism and pragmatism. But despite the wide range of his curiosity, nearly all his chief concerns were present in that YMCA lecture. Everything, for James, boiled down to the question of how to escape the enveloping fear that life was essentially meaningless—how to get out of bed in the morning and get on with the business of living.

Jackson Lears is editor of Raritan *and author, most recently, of* Something for Nothing: Luck in America.

"My words are to deal only with that metaphysical *tedium vitae* which is peculiar to reflecting men," James announced. It was especially peculiar to James's generation. For educated Americans who came of age during or soon after the Civil War, positivistic science blew like a frigid wind across the intellectual landscape, dispelling the comforting warmth of inherited faith, reducing reality to the precisely observable and measurable, challenging familiar ideas of morality and freedom. The specter of determinism threatened to turn the most exalted human strivings into the twitchings of automatons. No wonder "reflecting men"—and women—fell into a *tedium vitae* from time to time.



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James insisted that the positivist case against religious faith was not proven. It was still intellectually permissible to believe in "the existence of an unseen order of some kind in which the riddle of the natural order may be found explained." What was no longer possible was the old dogmatic certitude—but that was less a loss than a gain, an opening to the enchanting world of "maybe." It was a world where almost anything was possible, even a heterodox God—a finite, unfinished deity-in-process who needed human beings as much as the other way around. Uncertainty was the key to the ethic of maybe; "not a victory is gained, not a deed of faithfulness or courage is done, except upon a maybe,"

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James said. Risk was the essence of life.

And the risk of belief in that "unseen order" was the bet with the biggest payoff. James characterized the stakes starkly: "If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it *feels* like a real fight—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem." Betting on belief brought revitalization in this world rather than salvation in the next. This activist reworking of Pascal's wager lay at the core of James's thought. He subjected religious truths to the pragmatic test, evaluating them with respect to their consequences—which, at least in his own case, made life worth living.

But why did life have to be "a real fight" in order to be worth living? The question pushes us back into the biography of a man who sat out the "real fight" of his generation, the Civil War, while his best friend (Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.) and two of his brothers served and fought. Yet while James longed for manly testing like many of his contemporaries (most notoriously Theodore Roosevelt), he never equated masculinity with martial virtue. Instead he rejected imperialism and sought a "moral equivalent of war."

Asking "Is Life Worth Living?" allowed James to gesture toward all his major themes—the centrality of chance, choice and moral struggle; the pragmatic value of religious belief; the fascination with "wildness" as well as with its redemption. The lecture also epitomized his ability to bring cosmic questions down to earth, to engage them with a visceral passion. He first staked his claim to an academic reputation by arguing for the biological basis of the human mind, while at the same time he resisted the reduction of spirit to matter. Philosophy was rooted in psychology, which in turn was rooted in physiology. Seldom has a thinker been so thoroughly embodied in his thought.

Robert Richardson recognizes the union of thought and thinker. (His epigraph is the passage about life as "a real fight.") This is one of the many strengths of his superb intellectual biography, which may be the most fully rounded portrait of William James that we have ever had. The book combines a deft attention to texts with a keen awareness of contexts. The most important context, as Richardson realizes, is the transatlantic ferment of Modernism. For decades, James's allegedly "American" traits have been used to justify his appropriation by cultural chauvinists keen to juxtapose Yankee practicality against "European" ideology. Richardson says goodbye to all that. He reveals how thoroughly James was involved in the redefinition of mind—and the reconnection of mind to body—that was occurring on both sides of the Atlantic in the decades leading up to World War I.

Yet even this biography, for all its reach, does not fully capture James's originality: the melding of modern and antimodern sensibilities in his Modernist worldview, the profound differences between him and the other thinkers who took to calling themselves "pragmatists." In the suppleness of his thought, James was sui generis, then as now. He despised the intellectual hubris of reductionist explanation—how deftly he would have skewered the lumps of pop-evolutionary argument served up by the likes of Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, and how effectively the inquisitive title of his essay "Does Consciousness Exist?" counters the pomposity of Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*. Nobody ever accused James of avoiding the tough questions.

The author of 'Is Life Worth Living?' and 'Does Consciousness Exist?,' James could not be accused of avoiding the tough questions.

James's intellectual openness underlay his radical empiricism. He took all sorts of experience seriously, including hallucination and despair. To be sure, there was something characteristically "American" in his discomfort with the past, his willed embrace of the present and future. Yet he never denied his own experience with suicidal depression; instead he mixed "life's bitterer flavors" into his mature worldview. If one friend said James was "born afresh every morning," another said it seemed "he had just stepped out of this sadness in order to meet you." James's own unresolved conflicts animated his philosophy. He resisted closure to the end. In his last published piece, he borrowed a phrase from "a pluralistic mystic," Benjamin Paul Blood, to serve as "pluralism's heraldic device." It was "ever not quite."

James's father, Henry Sr., would have flatly refused that motto. Insisting that "God is the only being in the universe," he was a thoroughgoing monist and Swedenborgian mystic—freed by his inherited wealth to pursue a life of endless travel and philosophical eccentricity. His lavish ways would soon exhaust the family money supply; William and his brother Henry would be forced to write for pay and cut the best publishing deals they could manage. (Both became pretty good at it.) But their childhood was privileged—a restless idyll of hotel rooms in New York, Geneva, London and Paris, and (for a few years) a house in Newport, Rhode Island, where William began to display his considerable artistic talent. The painter John La Farge was impressed, but not Henry James Sr. He wanted his son to follow the sterner path of science. The firing on Fort Sumter brought matters to a head. Henry Sr. did not want his eldest son to go to war, and William did not press the point. Though he signed up as a ninety-day recruit in the Newport Artillery Company, he never served in the Army. Despite Richardson's exhaustive research, we never learn how William avoided the draft when it was instituted later in the war. One assumes Henry Sr. hired a substitute. William's absence from the fight would haunt him for the rest of his life.

Instead of going to war he went to Harvard, "a small and stagnant place" in 1861 (as Richardson observes) but also the home of the Lawrence Scientific School, where James could pursue a course of study that would please his father. More important, the science curriculum, mediocre as it may have been, knocked some of the naïve idealism out of William, immersing him in the palpable, resistant reality of the material world. "What is real," he would later write, "always pushes back." Yet even as he confronted the irresistible power of matter, he also began to explore subtler forces, by following the research of Michael Faraday into electromagnetism. Perhaps it was from Faraday, Richardson suggests, that James derived his lifelong fascination with energy. If matter pushed back, energy rushed forward—and promised somehow to redeem matter from its inertia. "Matter is motion, motion is force, force is will," James would later write. Characteristically, he brought the categories down to the personal level, from abstract force to individual will.

But increasingly he was troubled by the specter of a merely material universe, where human actions were determined by chemical or biological circumstance and free will was little more than a convenient fiction. Traditional theism was no longer an option, even as it was defended by the charismatic star of the Lawrence Scientific School, Louis Agassiz—sworn enemy of Darwin

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who vowed to discredit the theory of natural selection by locating scientific evidence of special creation. James thought Agassiz was a brilliant teacher and even accompanied him on a specimen-hunting trip to Brazil, but in the end he decided Darwin had the better of the argument. What troubled James was not Darwinism but the broader set of materialist assumptions that characterized most scientific disciplines by the later nineteenth century. His decision to attend Harvard Medical School, which was committed to the practical side of medicine, plunged him more deeply into the realm of brute fact. In a world where mechanical causation was the only kind that mattered, James remained haunted by the fear that moral action was meaningless.

James took philosophical issues personally, even physically. In a universe empty of meaning, what was an honorable man to do? Since his Newport days, when he had struggled to paint despite his father's indifference, James had been tormented by mysterious and probably psychosomatic ailments—indigestion, back pain, eye strain. All these disorders persisted through the late 1860s and early 1870s, accompanied by immobilizing bouts of severe depression. As Richardson describes it, James fell into a pattern of crash, resolution, partial recovery, followed by another crash. The most memorable crash came in the spring of 1870; years later James recounted it (attributing it to a correspondent) in *Varieties*: "I went one evening into a dressing room in the twilight to procure some article that was there; when suddenly there fell upon me without any warning, just as if it came out of the darkness, a horrible fear of my own existence." The fear merged with the image of a hopeless epileptic patient he had seen in an asylum, who "sat there like a sort of sculptured Egyptian cat or Peruvian mummy, moving nothing but his black eyes and looking absolutely non-human." This vision of an Absolute Other (complete with exotic, imperial connotations) provoked a terrifying sense of kinship in James. "That shape am I, I felt, potentially," he remembered. "Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him." Seldom has the fear of nonbeing, of the loss of the self, been put so palpably. James had looked into the abyss, and the abyss had looked (blankly) back. What would now be characterized as a panic attack was for him an encounter with nothingness. As Richardson observes, the recollection of this experience helped to account for the hint of sadness in James's eyes that one sees in nearly every photo of him.

Still his emotional state remained labile, unpredictable. From time to time he glimpsed a way out. One such occasion was the death of his bright and spirited cousin Minnie Temple, at 24, from consumption. James was more than a little in love with Minnie, and her death was a crushing loss for him. But it also made him realize that we have to "ascend to some sort of partnership with fate, and since tragedy is at the heart of us, go to meet it, work it to our ends, instead of dodging it all our days, and being run down by it at last. Use your death (or your life, it's all one meaning) *tat tvam asi*." The last phrase, Richardson observes, is from the Chandogya Upanishad; James translated it as "that art Thou." The implication was that since the principle of God was common to both the cosmos and the individual, Minnie Temple's spirit was one with the spirit of the whole universe. It was "a sudden revelation," Richardson writes, "and not a Christian one." What began in an existentialist idiom ("use your death") ended in a mystical intimation of a larger life beyond individual human life.

In nearly every photo of James there is a hint of sadness in his eyes, as if he were haunted by his experiences of staring into the abyss.

A more characteristic escape hatch from depression, for James, involved the affirmation of will, choice and habit. The key moment was his reading of a passage by French philosopher Charles Renouvier. "I finished the first part of Renouvier's 2nd Essay and saw no reason why his definition of free will—the sustaining of a thought because I choose to when I might have other thoughts—need be the definition of an illusion," James wrote in his diary six weeks after Minnie's death. "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will." This was a pivotal moment in his intellectual development, especially since he coupled it with a renewed emphasis on the importance of "habits of order." Discipline was crucial: "Not in maxims... but in accumulated acts of thought lies salvation." For historians, this has long been the key to James's turnaround—what could be more inspiring (especially to intellectuals) than the tale of a man thinking his way out of a depression?

Unfortunately it is not altogether accurate. James continued to flail about for another couple of years. Renouvier provided an important theoretical rationale for escape from depression, but what finally sprung the trap for good was simpler: a job. On the recommendation of James's friend Henry Bowditch, Charles Eliot appointed him professor of anatomy and physiology at Harvard. Here was a reason to get out of bed in the morning. James responded swiftly to work and structure. His health improved. He earned the first money of his life (at 31). And soon he began courting Alice Gibbens, who was comely, literate, perceptive and patient—a superb life partner for James, as it turned out. By the mid-1870s, William had been emotionally reborn. His feverish pursuit of Alice spawned a burst of creative energy. He wrote Alice excited letters about his new sense of self, which he experienced during those moments when "he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive." This was the "deepest principle," he concluded, behind all his theories. Deftly responding, she sent him a compass. A year later they were married.

James's writing during this period revealed the shape of his thoughts to come. In reviews and lectures he began to explore the creative potential of uncertainty. "Doubt itself is an active state," he wrote, becoming convinced that what we call freedom grew out of what physicists call chance. Challenging Herbert Spencer's influential work, he insisted that the mind was more than a passive reflector of reality; preference and interest, not external stimuli, were the key to consciousness. Alice's compass was working its way. Philosophical problems were at bottom psychological problems, James concluded, and rationality itself was rooted in sentiment—the wish for a world that made sense.

Still, wishes were not enough. James was enough of a scientist to know that reality had its own agenda. Through the 1880s, as he struggled to complete the long-overdue *Principles*, he continued to sort through the conflicting claims of matter and mind. In 1885 the death of his 18-month-old son, Herman (James called him "Humster"), made clear that the issues would remain profoundly personal. "To anyone who has ever looked on the face of a dead child or parent," he reflected years later, "the mere fact that matter could have taken for a time that precious form, ought to make matter sacred for

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ever after." James remained an idiosyncratic materialist.

The question, for him, was how to acknowledge the biological foundations of thought without reducing mental life to mere reflex. So he explored the boundaries between voluntary and involuntary action. In voluntary actions, James wrote, "the act is foreseen from the very first. The idea of it always precedes its execution." But the path from thought to accomplishment was not simply an exercise of will. James observed that "before the will can get to work it needs a store of recollections of how various movements may feel." Habit created neural pathways. Consider, James suggested, how we get out of bed on a cold morning. We may lie in bed "for an hour at a time unable to brace ourselves to the resolve," until "we suddenly find that we have got up." We consent to the original impulse to get up because the inhibiting impulses momentarily fall away and the habit of getting up exerts itself. James's chapter on "Habit" in *Principles* unveiled a physiological explanation for his deliverance from despair. He had learned how to get out of bed in the morning.

Yet James's intellectual commitments were more than an exercise in establishing habitual behavior. He knew that volition sometimes involved deliberate decision and sustained effort—such as his choice to "believe in free will." Indeed, as Richardson observes, the chapter on will and the heroism of effort is the peak moment in *Principles*: "'*Will you or won't you have it so?*' is the most probing question we are ever asked," James wrote. His obsession with will and choice was scarcely unique among upper-class Victorian men, many of whom aimed to exorcise the demons of doubt through action. But while James celebrated action, he did not flee doubt. He celebrated its capacity to deepen faith.

Yet James's determination to be up and doing prevented him from ever taking pleasure in the contemplation of the past, or pondering the powerful links between memory and imagination. To dwell even fitfully on the past, for James, was to risk crippling nostalgia; the past was the shadow side of will and therefore must be rejected. There were times, too, when his privileged freedom allowed him to risk reifying choice into an autonomous force, a black box that solved all philosophical problems. "We need only in cold blood ACT as if the thing in question were real, and keep acting as if it were real, and it will infallibly end by growing into such a connection with our life that it will become real," he wrote in 1888. From his own experience, James knew that the mind-body relationship was a two-way street; his belief in the power of belief led him to sympathize with "mind-cure" and other cults of positive thinking that surfaced in America at the turn of the century and have frequently resurfaced since.

But James could never be merely a positive thinker. That became apparent in *Varieties*, which contrasted "the religion of healthy-mindedness" with the travails of the "twice-born" and "sick souls"—among whom James included himself (disguised). Healthy-minded believers felt at home in the universe; sick souls felt that they were "living on a frozen lake surrounded by cliffs," knowing that the ice was melting. Their sense of dread could be cured only through some kind of conversion experience. Yet even this could not heal the divisions in the sick soul. "Neither Bunyan nor Tolstoy could become what we have called healthy-minded," James wrote. "They had drunk too deeply of the cup of bitterness ever to forget its taste, and their redemption is into a universe two stories deep. Each of them realized a good which broke the effective edge of his sadness, yet the sadness was preserved as a minor ingredient in the heart of the faith by which it was overcome." This was autobiography. "If there was one thing James understood all the way down, it was the persistence of sadness," Richardson perceptively observes.

James's openness to varieties of belief reflected his passionate commitment to the possibility of multiple explanations.

Protestant in sensibility if not belief, James focused on personal narratives of the inner life—especially conversion experiences—rather than communal rituals or observances. While this narrowed his range, it increased his intensity, his ability to locate that "hot place in a man's consciousness" that constituted "*the habitual center of his personal energy*." Sometimes the experiences in *Varieties* resonated with James's own "hot places." This was especially true of the ineffable but noetic experience of mysticism, the feeling that one's identity was somehow merging with a larger cosmic or perhaps even divine identity. There is "More," and you are part of it. *Tat tvam asi*.

Yet James was unwilling simply to accept the faith in "More." He characteristically turned belief into an active proposition, a bet. "No fact in human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance," he wrote. Taking a risk on "More" did not mean embracing traditional theism. "Who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not actually help God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks?" This was the quintessence of "ever not quite"—a pluralistic universe where even God's tasks are unfinished. This was hardly orthodox Christianity.

From Jonathan Edwards to Emerson and Whitman, an American tradition celebrated mystical experiences as orgasmic congress with Nature (if not with God). James had experienced something like this one July night in the Adirondacks in 1898, not long after he had been invited to give the Gifford Lectures. He described it as a tumultuous convocation of pagan and orthodox deities: "The streaming moonlight lit up things in a magical checkered play, and it seemed as if the gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral gods of the inner life." This was the experience that triggered *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and unlike much of the rest of the mysticism recounted in that volume, it was pluralistic rather than monistic. It was not a matter of merging with the One but of mingling with the many.

Though Richardson does not catch the connection, pluralism in religious matters could be a polite name for polytheism—the paradoxically antimodern impulse animating many forms of Modernist thought. More democratic and inclusive in his sympathies than Henry Adams, T.S. Eliot and other antimodern Modernists, James nevertheless shared their desire to escape the metaphysical dead end of positivist certainty. At the apex of monotheism and secularism, in the confident Anglophone culture of the early 1900s, they imagined a return of repressed gods that might be more than a heap of broken images. James was animated by this yearning, too.

His openness to varieties of belief arose not out of mere tolerance but from a passionate commitment to the possibility of multiple explanations. He refused to dismiss the validity of individual experiences—no matter how bizarre—without giving them a fair hearing. Though he remained a skeptic, he contained multi-

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tudes. He tolerated all sorts of disreputable beliefs, from spiritualism to psychoanalysis. Theories of the unconscious were especially appealing to a sick soul, reborn into a two-storied universe. He insisted on the importance of attending to "wild facts" that fail to fit existing formulas. "The great field for new discoveries," he wrote, "is always the Unclassified Residuum." Radical empiricism was good science.

James's intellectual openness had political implications. In "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," he had written of how difficult and important it was for people (including himself) to cultivate awareness of other people's inner lives—especially of that vital center of being that gave them meaning and purpose. A pluralistic foreign policy would sanction multiple vital centers, granting legitimacy to local aspirations even among "backward" peoples; an imperial foreign policy, by contrast, denied those aspirations in the name of progress. After the Spanish-American War, the extension of the American empire to the Philippines required the brutal suppression of the Filipinos' own independence movement, while imperialists brayed at home about democracy and self-determination. James was livid: "What an absolute savage and pirate the passion of military conquest always is," he wrote in the *Boston Transcript*. Detesting "mere bigness," he recoiled from the coming world of corporations and mega-states.

James did have one thing in common with imperialists like Roosevelt: a longing for regeneration. It sparked James's quest for a "moral equivalent of war" to counteract Roosevelt's belligerence. But James moved beyond morality to a fascination with energy itself. Part of the appeal of mind-cure and other therapies preaching a "Gospel of Relaxation" was that they offered to reawaken us to new life and power. James was interested in any idea, religious or secular, that unleashed energy and moved us to effective action.

James's growing preoccupation with tapping into unseen powers linked him with Modernist thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic. The taxonomies and determinisms of positivist science were giving way to more fluid and indeterminate conceptions of nature. As Richardson writes: "Einstein's equation for the equivalence of mass and energy, and James's assertion of the equivalence of thought and thinker, forged, together with modern art and modern music, a new world, a world James both lived in and helped bring about."

Like other Modernist thinkers, James replaced subject-object dualism with an emphasis on the mind in constant dialogue with the world. The origins of Modernist "process philosophy" can be traced to the brilliant chapter in the *Principles*, "The Stream of Thought." As James wrote, our mental life, "like a bird's life, seems to be made of an alternation of flights and perchings." Previously philosophers had paid attention only to the perchings. James's great transatlantic ally was the vitalist Henri Bergson, whose ideas were very close to what James was cooking up himself at about this time: "a philosophy of pure experience." Like the late novels of Henry James, the late philosophy of William James turned "on grammatical particles. 'With, near, next, like, from, towards, against, because, for, through, my,'—these words designate types of conjunctive relations arranged in a roughly ascending order of intimacy and inclusiveness." Life was in the transitions as much as in the terms connected.

This was not relativism, as Richardson notes, but relationism. Though he does not elaborate on the term, it suggests the largest significance of James's philosophy—his capacity to conceive the immersion of all thought in the "blooming, buzzing confusion" of "pure experience," without losing the active role of mind in moving from percept to concept. James preferred "both-and" to "either-or." No wonder contemporary theorists of consciousness, resisting the reductionism of Dennett and Dawkins, have begun to rediscover William James. His radical empiricism may yet prove more durable than his pragmatism.

Richardson implies as much by making James's pragmatism little more than an afterthought to his absorption in the intellectual ferment of Modernism. There is good reason for this. The vaunted "pragmatic method," articulated by the logician Charles Peirce, was appropriated by James for his own idiosyncratic purposes. Pragmatists all argued that ideas should be judged by their actual consequences. For many, including John Dewey, good consequences were those that promoted enlightened public policy. This benign but implicitly utilitarian perspective promoted the assimilation of pragmatism into managerial liberalism. But James detached pragmatism from conventional criteria of utility ("what works"). For him, the consequences of ideas could be as personal as getting out of bed in the morning, or stepping out of a sadness to meet someone. Even everyday acts could require a quiet heroism. We can only be grateful that James managed to keep summoning it. ■

Careful, He Might Hear You

ALI SETHI

IN THE COUNTRY OF MEN. By Hisham Matar. Dial. 247 pp. $22.

Countries don't come any more alien than present-day Libya. Years of censorship have insured that the bulk of our knowledge comes from maps and CIA estimates: It forms a sparsely populated collar on the African continent, is padded by Egypt and Algeria, was once ruled by the Ottomans and later, briefly, by the Italians. Since September 1969 it has been patrolled by the henchmen of military dictator Muammar al-Qaddafi. His adventurist politics and stubborn pursuit of WMDs resulted in a costly isolation from the international community that ended only a few years ago when he extended an olive branch to the West, gloating over what has been called the "Libyan Model" of dialogue and negotiation. Sanctions were relaxed, though fears were not; Qaddafi is still alive, hatted darkly, his tinted aviators watching from propaganda billboards across the country.

Hisham Matar's powerful debut novel, which was shortlisted for the 2006 Man Booker Prize, tries to pry the lid off this quietly simmering caldron. *In the Country of Men* is set in 1970s Tripoli, "brilliant and still" under the sun, dotted with "occasional gray patches of mercy carved into the white of everything." We are listening to the voice of 9-year-old Suleiman, Slooma to his beloved father, a prodemocracy dissident constantly on the run from the authorities. Anxious Suleiman spends his days with his mother, who paces the house frantically smoking cigarettes and makes

Ali Sethi is a former Nation *intern.*

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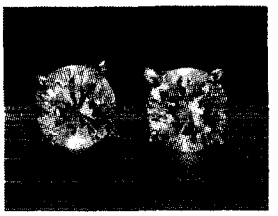

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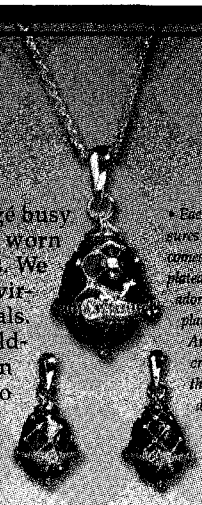

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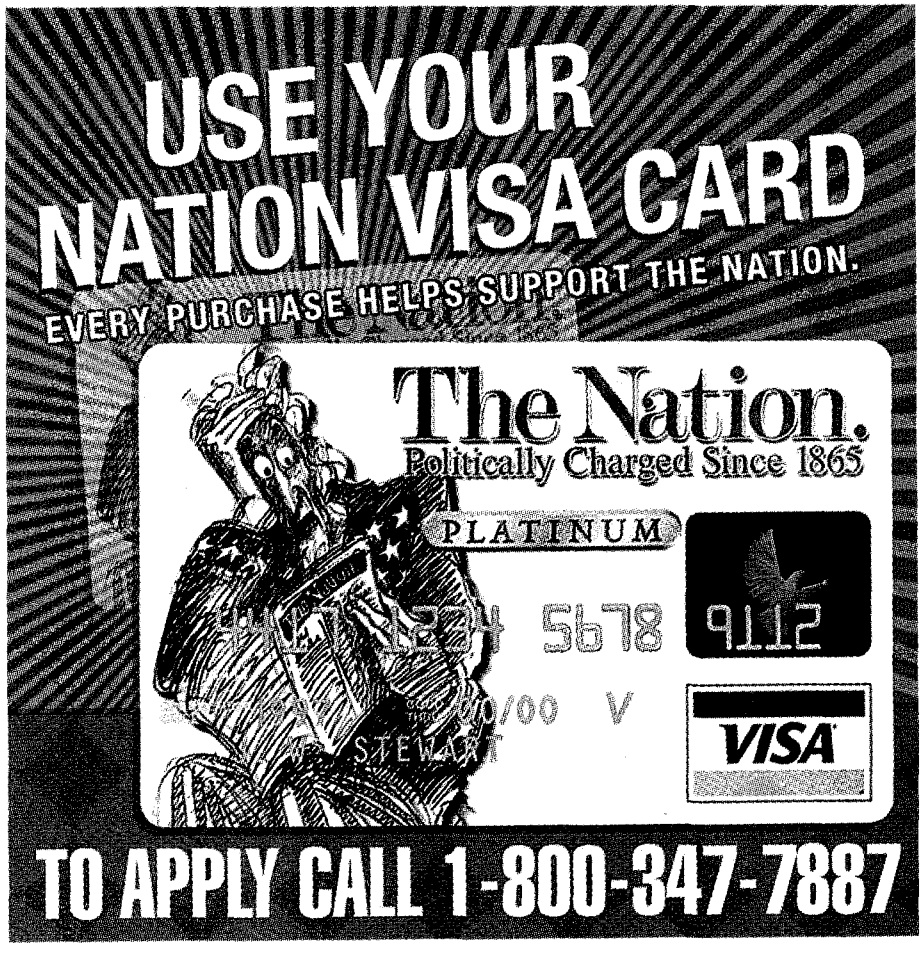

frequent trips to the baker for a "medicine" drink that is banned in the country and must be hidden under her seat on the drive home. At traffic signals Suleiman and his mother have to avoid eye contact with government personnel: "Everyone knows you mustn't overtake a Revolutionary Committee car, and if you have to, then you must do it discreetly, without showing any pleasure in it."

This intimate tone ("everyone knows") is a clever trick. Suleiman speaks as if to someone familiar with his surroundings and is therefore the best kind of tour guide: A neighbor being dragged out of his house by government operatives is eerily described as wearing "that strange embarrassed smile of his." He is manhandled and thrown into a car that has been waiting outside his house like "a giant dead moth in the sun." Another neighbor, Ustath Jafer, is known to be an "Antenna," a government spy. In front of his wife you must say things like, "How wonderful the revolution has been for this country!"

At home you can curse the regime, but only in cautious whispers; the telephones are tapped, the television screen flooded with the faces of political prisoners. Ustath Rashid, after being abducted from his house, is interrogated at length on national TV for conspiring against the state. The broadcast is interrupted now and then by a stagnant image of pink flowers. (Young Suleiman suspects this to be the work of the "Guide" himself, who must have a switch by his side with which to tune his subjects in and out of state-controlled programming.) Suleiman's mother watches the televised interrogation in silence. She knows the authorities will come for her husband. She is scared, but also bitter.

Matar is not afraid of complicating his characters. Young Suleiman is the apple of his mother's eye but also a daily reminder of his violent conception; Suleiman's mother was forced into an arranged marriage and rails against the day constantly. This is deeply disturbing for the boy, who has seen his father lying on top of his mother in bed, doing something that did not seem reciprocal. Suleiman's father, then, is both oppressor and oppressed, as is his shrieking mother. And Suleiman, too, gets a taste of power when he joins the neighborhood bullies in taunting a boy whose father has been labeled a traitor. Suleiman will soon find himself in a similar position.

The novel feeds these concentric ironies until they are ripe for puncture. Intelligence officials barge into the house looking for

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accomplices, scavenging in drawers for incriminating evidence. They now have enough information on Suleiman's father to arrest him, but he has anticipated their visit and is in hiding. Suleiman's fragile mother is left to face them. She burns her husband's books and hangs a portrait of Qaddafi, "the Guide of the Libyan Popular Revolution," in the drawing room as a declaration of loyalty to the regime. The intelligence officials are not fooled; one of the men monitors the house all day from inside a car. Suleiman tries talking to the man and finds that he has a voice like an old woman's, his lips dark "as if they were painted with blue dye." And then this, the final detail: "Tight curls formed a helmet on his head."

Government agent, woman's voice, blue lips, tight curls—only a child would be stirred by this strange combination of menace and delicacy. And only a child would pause to mention it while recounting a much larger political episode. This is because for children all things are equal in their strangeness. Life's grammar has yet to be decoded, so every little detail is felt vividly and added to the growing arsenal of worldly knowledge. Matar knows this, and he puts it to good use. Sight, sound, smell—these are Suleiman's friends, his companions on his quest for meaning. As he carries them into the thicket of politics and history, he illuminates for us a world at once familiar and foreign, both banal and extraordinary. We are terrified and mesmerized, but rarely surprised.

We are, after all, in the country of men. ■

FILMS

The Spy Who Loved Me

STUART KLAWANS

THE LIVES OF OTHERS • GRBAVICA: THE LAND OF MY DREAMS

They come out of Europe during Oscar season, wreathed in more than a dozen awards. *The Lives of Others*, from Germany, tells of suffering in the East during the 1980s, as supervised by the GDR's secret police. *Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams*, from Bosnia-Herzegovina, tells of suffering in the 1990s during the civil war and the continuation of that suffering today. Both films are the debut features of academically trained directors in their early 30s, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck and Jasmila Zbanic. Both, I think, are pretty good. But as much as each film tells us about its subject matter, the pair tell us even more about the tastes of juries and prize committees in Europe, and their eagerness to create the next star director.

Before I go on, though, you might ask: Is it valid to generate big conclusions from so small a sample? I say the answer is yes, if you think imagination has anything to do with film. Test the method yourself, closer to home: Simply close your eyes and think like an Oscar voter.

Let's suppose you're a member of the Academy—that is, someone who makes a living in the mainstream American industry—and you've just filled in your nominating ballot for Best Picture. If you listed *The Departed* as your top choice, you voted for the year's only big-studio movie that was both artistically respectable and a box-office hit. Seriously, there was just one. Had you wanted to find that combination in any other 2006 release, you would have had to pick *Happy Feet*.

If you nominated *Letters From Iwo Jima* for Best Picture, you voted for an artistically respectable big-studio picture that you wished would become a hit. Since you know Warner Bros. rushed *Iwo Jima* into release after the embarrassing commercial failure of *Flags of Our Fathers*, you're essentially rooting for a turnaround.

If you put *The Queen* at the head of your ballot, you've decided that artistically respectable movies will have to be made by the thrifty Brits if they're going to be viable. The best bet for American studios (or their specialty divisions) is to buy into these pictures afterward, sharing in the glory and doing a middling business (a mere $45 million gross for *The Queen*, as of this writing).

If you chose *Babel* ($27 million gross), you've even given up on the Brits. You just want "Hollywood" (a front in this case

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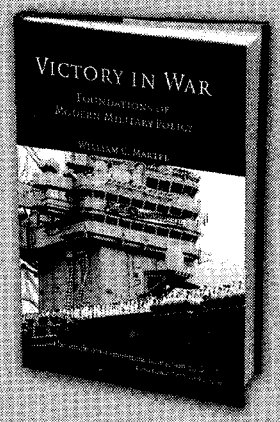

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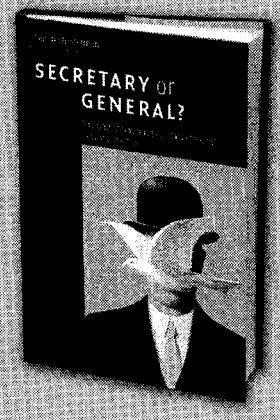

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for a couple of canny Mexicans) to get its once-a-year spritz of Eau de Prestige.

And if you chose *Little Miss Sunshine*? In that case, you want to encourage people younger than Martin Scorsese to make respectable pictures and yet please the crowd; $60 million and counting for Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, on an $8 million budget! Give those kids Oscars and first-look deals! Then, in ten years, you can wonder what became of them, or else complain that they've directed *Pirates of the Caribbean 7*.

QED: A small sample can show something large. In the case of this year's Oscar nominations, five pictures reveal the rattle-brained condition of the American movie industry, which for the most part can no longer either make art or sell it. At the top level, though, people might want to buy a little of the stuff, if someone will please tell them what it is.

Now, to return to my two-picture sample of European prizewinners: The industry that rewarded *The Lives of Others* and *Grbavica* has thereby shown itself to be entirely comfortable with art, or at least aspirations to it. Both of these pictures express an almost pious faith in music and literature—and, by extension, film—to awaken the conscience and heal wounds. This isn't a theme you encounter in the average American Oscar nominee.

But then, neither does the average Oscar nominee pretend that art's transformative power has been set in motion simply because it's been invoked. In this year's Best Picture candidates, problems that were intractable stay that way: Soldiers who fight against impossible odds are defeated, losers desperately chase after success and fail, crowned heads grudgingly bow before the people's will (while self-styled reformers learn to bow before crowned heads), and the only creature to survive Boston's corruption is a rat. Even *Babel*, with its urge to tie up the whole global package with a shiny ribbon, acknowledges that some things in the box aren't a gift.

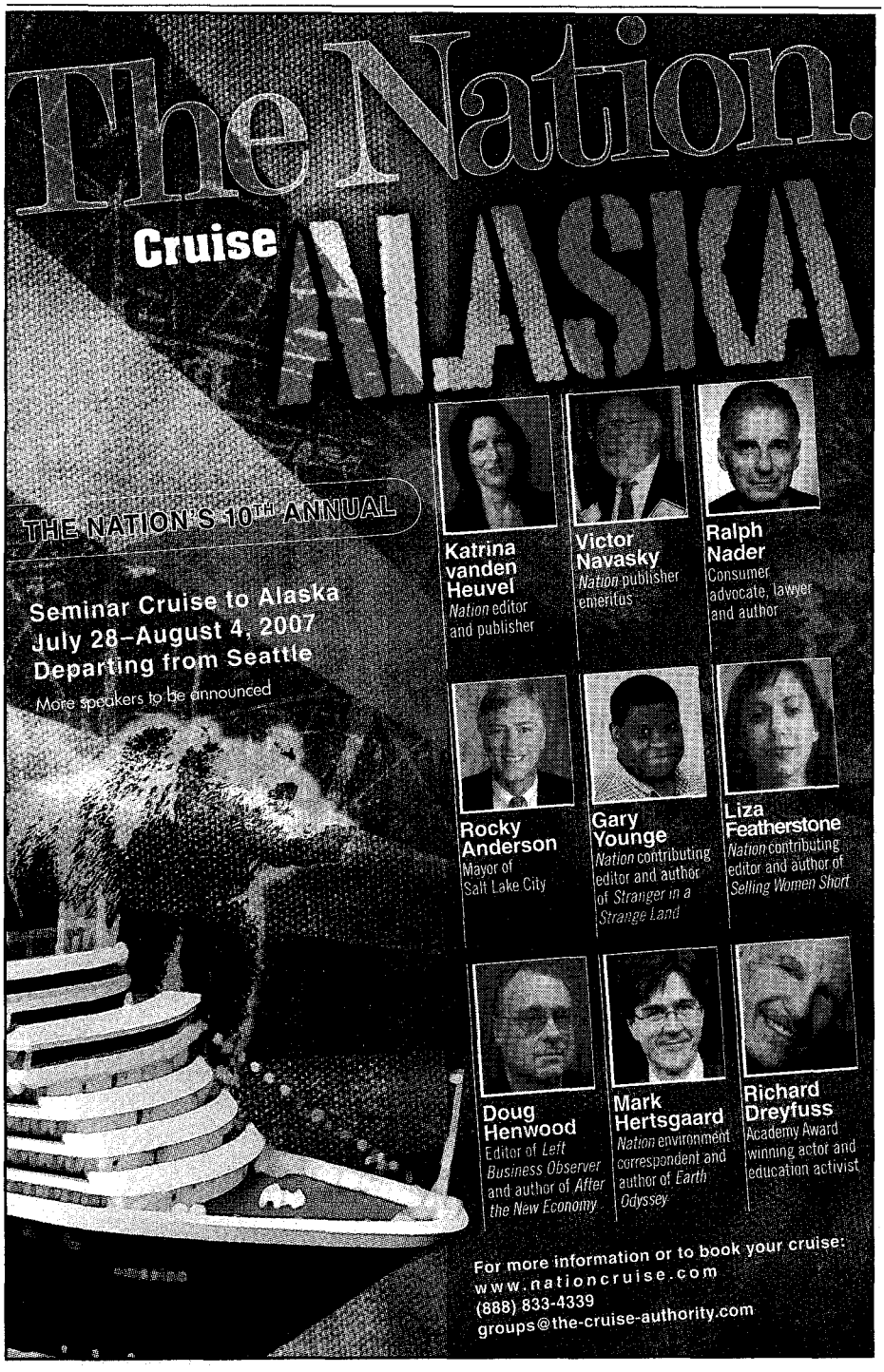
Whether from tough-mindedness or cynicism, this year's Academy voters have been drawn to films that offer no easy resolution. The Europeans, by contrast, give prizes to feel-good art about mass murder, rape and police repression.

What's going on with *The Lives of Others* and *Grbavica*?

Set in autumnal East Berlin during the mid-1980s, along colorless and deserted streets, within the rooms of a cluttered old apartment and (most impressive of all) in the actual offices formerly occupied by the Stasi, *The Lives of Others* is a drama about two men who don't know each other but are both struggling with their conscience, and doing it while obsessing over the same woman.

Georg (Sebastian Koch), a square-jawed 40-ish hunk with flowing movie-star hair, is East Germany's most valued playwright, being the only one who is also read in the West. Though troubled by the silencing of his friends and fellow artists, Georg is a committed socialist who keeps his criticisms within approved limits—which means he might as well be silent. As reward, he gets his plays produced (though not as he'd like them to be) while enjoying the love of his lead actress, Christa-Maria (Martina Gedeck), a beauty who is robust enough to look convincing when cast as a factory worker and yet can boogie fetchingly at an opening-night party, where East Germany's hottest combo plays jazz that's twenty years out of date.

Georg is loyal to the state, and life for the most part is good; but his happiness reads as arrogance when spied by a spare and lonely Stasi captain, Gerd Wiesler. Played by the astonishing Ulrich Mühe, who for this role must convey depths of feeling with a repertory of the tiniest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twitches and flickers, Wiesler is a level-eyed man with receding close-cropped hair. He looks something like Kevin Spacey, if Spacey had been bitten by a rat and was turning into Max Schreck. When ordered to begin full surveillance of Georg, this severe man sets to work with controlled fury, willingly sitting all day in the attic above Georg's apartment and listening to his every move. "They unwrap presents," Wiesler types into his report after Georg's birthday party, "then presumably have intercourse." You hear Wiesler's anger, and envy, clacking in every keystroke.

What happens next you already know. Wiesler, infatuated with Christa-Maria, begins wanting to protect her and the man she loves. Meanwhile Georg, shocked by the destruction of a cherished colleague, at last makes plans to speak out. His struggle is the easy one. The hard choices are made by Wiesler (who must play a double game) and by Christa-Maria, who has attracted the attentions of a heavily panting member of the party's central committee. As this tubby villain pressures her, under the shocked surveillance of Wiesler, *The Lives of Others* turns into a melodrama about a woman tied to the railroad tracks—or, rather, to a commissar's crotch.

I like melodramas. I also like the way this one downplays the dashing, conventional hero in favor of zipped-up Wiesler, who has understood (rather late, I think) that his bosses have no principles, only power. It doesn't bother me at all that the movie makes its Stasi captain into a victim of the regime, and even a rescuer. But then, *The Lives of Others* also makes Wiesler an artist of sorts. It uses a piece of piano music to convert him—see, he's sensitive!—and by the end has positioned him as Georg's ideal reader. If you think of Georg as a surrogate for the film's director, then the whole misty-eyed audience is redeemed at the end, not through anything it has done but merely through watching this display of artfulness by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck.

How he loves us! How we—some of us, anyhow—have rushed to thank him!

Grbavica: The Land of My Dreams is an altogether tougher piece of work. At times, it almost put me in mind of Fassbinder with its story of stolid, wary Esma (Mirjana Karanovic), a middle-aged single mother in Sarajevo, who is working desperately to raise 200 euros for her lying, ungrateful brat of a teenage daughter, Sara (Luna Mijovic).

In Sara's defense, I should mention that she has grown up in harsh circumstances.

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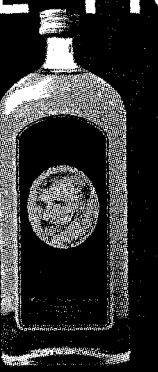
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She begins a flirtation with a boy by kicking garbage at him down a snowy alley, improves the relationship during school hours spent in the shell of a bombed-out building (his hideaway) and ultimately secures the loan of his handgun as a pledge of love. You might think Esma would be aware of some of this, but she's oblivious, either through an act of will or else because she's so tired from working nights at her new job in a gangster bar, serving beer while the air throbs with turbo-folk music and the other hostesses bump and grind.

Esma's got her bad boy, too: a bodyguard bouncer in the bar (Leon Lucev) to whom she unexpectedly, tentatively begins to warm. He'd studied economics once, before the war, and Esma finds she can share things with him, such as stories about going to postmortem identifications. Too bad that Sara can't be willfully oblivious. As Esma gets closer to her new friend, Sara becomes that much nastier.

Jasmila Zbanic directs most of this material—including the revelation of Esma's terrible past—with admirable brusqueness. When she wants an expressive effect, she often has the good sense to subtract instead of add. (Witness an extended scene where Esma comes begging in a shoe factory, and the dialogue falls away beneath the pounding of the machines.) Your attention is directed straight to the actors' faces—which is where you should be looking whenever Karanovic's liquid eyes are opened before you.

Yet Zbanic can't resist putting in her own little touches of art. She sets the tone for *Grbavica* with a self-consciously poetic opening shot, panning through a silent room across the massed faces of women, each apparently lost in her own reverie. The scene is a women's center in Sarajevo, to which Zbanic returns more than once. I don't mind being there when one of the women is pouring out her story, while another responds with a laughing fit; but when everyone just sits there, patiently listening to a mournful song, I want Sara to storm in and tell them to get stuffed.

This directorial posturing isn't incidental to *Grbavica*. It's essential, as the early warning of a soft and tuneful conclusion. Fassbinder would have sneered. I sighed, a little. But then, recognizing that Zbanic had flattered only her characters and not me, I decided this young filmmaker might be allowed room to grow, despite her awards.

Grbavica begins its well-deserved US theatrical release on February 16 with a run in New York City at Film Forum. ■

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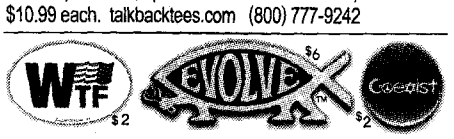

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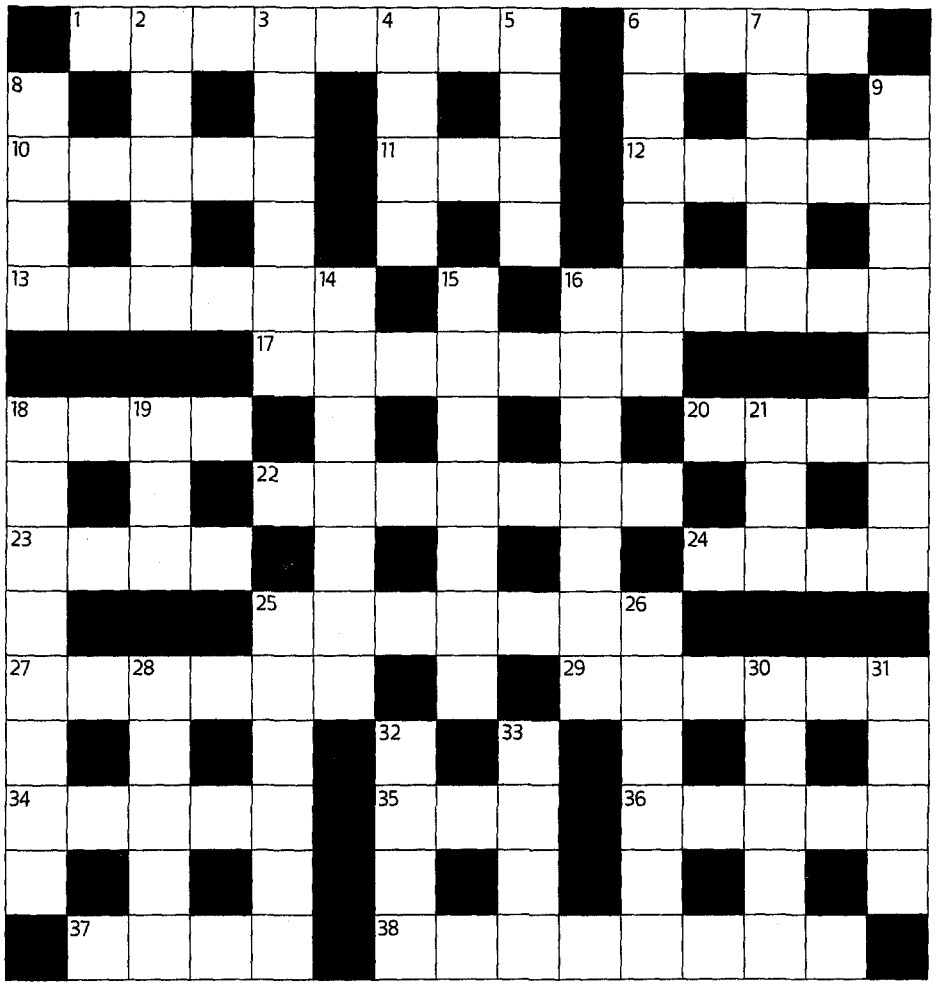

ACROSS

1 and **6** Your this might get shaken by the twist of earlier days, but they might do well in business. (12)

10, 11 and **32** down Sounds like a description of a stupid skinny type, but that's how friends are supposed to stick, all the way through. (5,3,4)

12 You'd really be decked out dressed to this, after the Bein establishment reveals it. (5)

13 Perhaps panted like a person who works hard to appear scholarly. (6)

16 See 37

17 The one who wrote the words when Sullivan composed is Ernie's friend, behind a soldier, at 50. (7)

18 and **20** Certainly you don't get up entirely exhausted. but the conductor might get you started with it. (4-4)

22 Lake bed? Turn things around for an exclusive group. (7)

23 See 3 down

24 Goes wrong when some people polish theirs too much. (4)

25 Like 10, not very bright, and in Paris dense and somewhat wooden. (7)

27 See 35

29 Not really how to clean up a tyrannical type! (6)

34 A most unusual defense for castles. (5)

35 and **27** Retire with a stage success, and those people will have about half a laugh. (3,3,3)

36 Follow the game where sprinters might be found. (5)

37 and **16** Genuine money, in certain countries, and what is left to the survivors is mainly land. (4,6)

38 Turn this name into what you might do, hoping to see someone in the office. (8)

DOWN

2 How some people stroll in Paris. (You may take little notice, but it's about dessert!) (1,4)

3 and **23** across The captivating habits of the kleptomaniac? (6,4)

4 A crooked lane taken in the dash. (4)

5 What the British term pretension shown by the team? (4)

6 The son mistakenly associated with Lincoln's first name, often. (6)

7 A cute little animal—and taken in by father. (5)

8 Come to a conclusion the way cooking vessels are upended. (4)

9 Like "the tops"—so coming up with the fireproof type. (8)

14 Another name for 27, occasioning a letter from Paul. (7)

15 Said to increase fondness, not having a present answer to show for it. (7)

16 What might imply some hesitation gets dug out of the ground, as some noble types are dressed. (7)

18 When things aren't working, a number possess it coming up to yours truly. (4,4)

19 Describing some sense of humor has a grainy sound. (3)

21 and **30** A versatile vegetable in what suggests a chicken farm. (8)

25 It could be an asset to a learner, being attached to the mortarboard. (6)

26 A German type takes a turn in one of the mountains. (6)

28 Remove the writing whenever a secret shows it. (5)

30 See 21

31 It might take twenty keepers to show off the little chap. (4)

32 See 10

33 A brief article in *Time*, possibly. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3069

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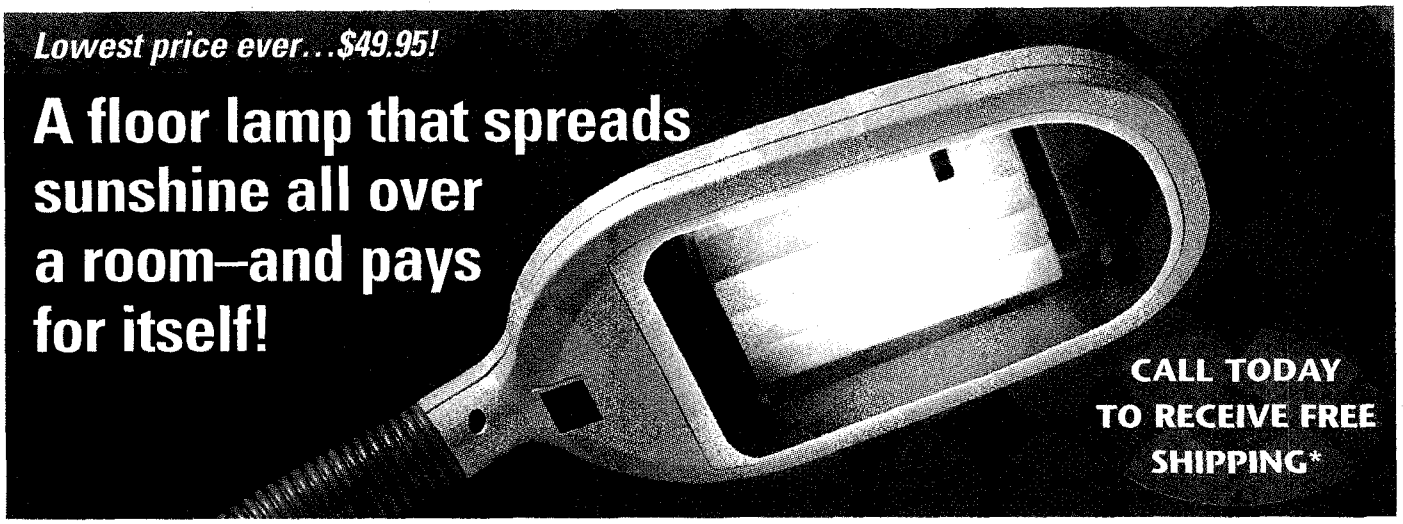

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**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999

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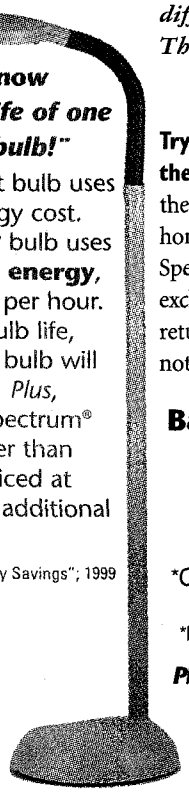

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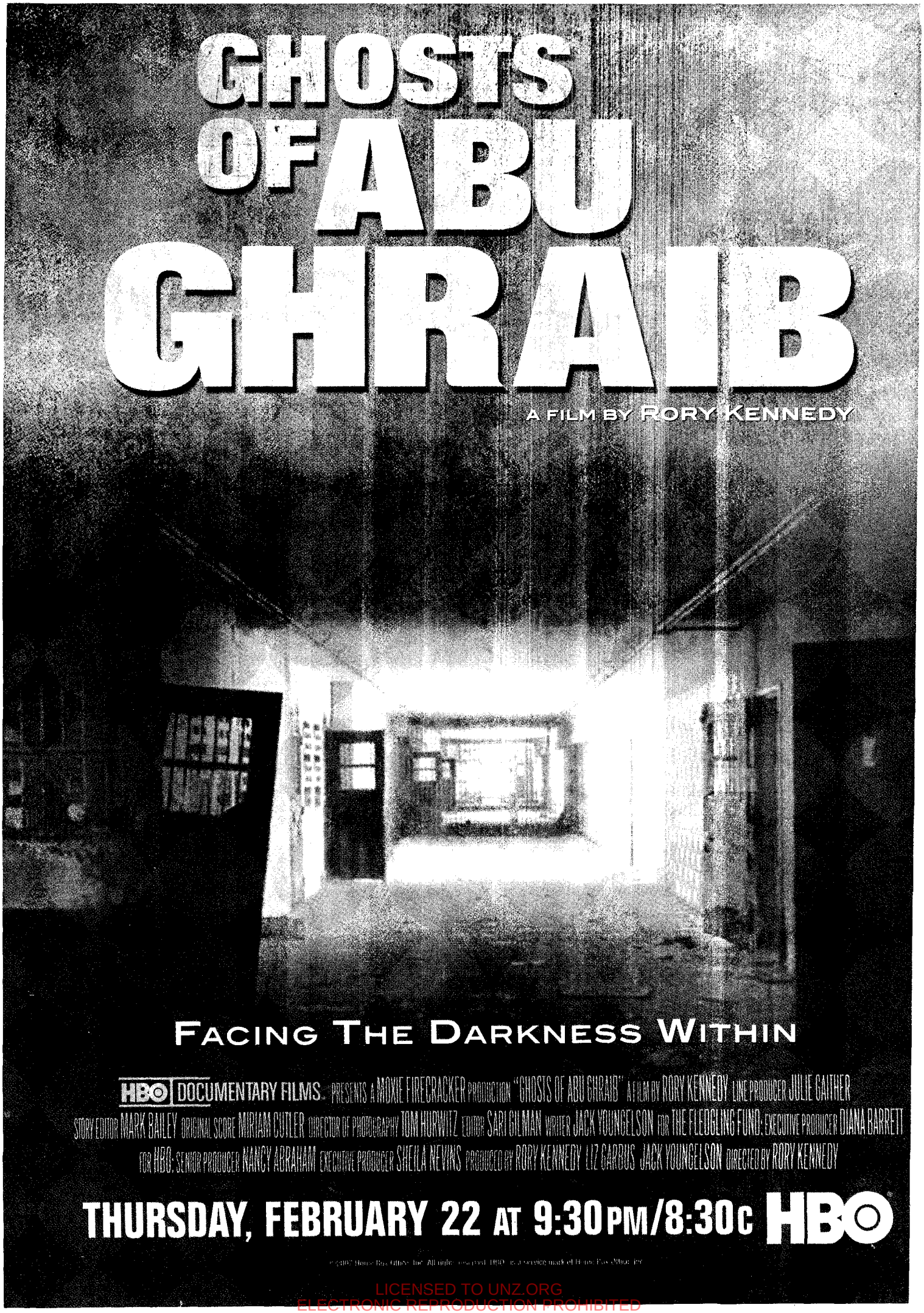
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A FILM BY RORY KENNEDY
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ELECTION '08: 636 DAYS AND [illegible]NG

The Nation.

GLOBAL WARMING: NO MORE EXCUSES
Mark Hertsgaard

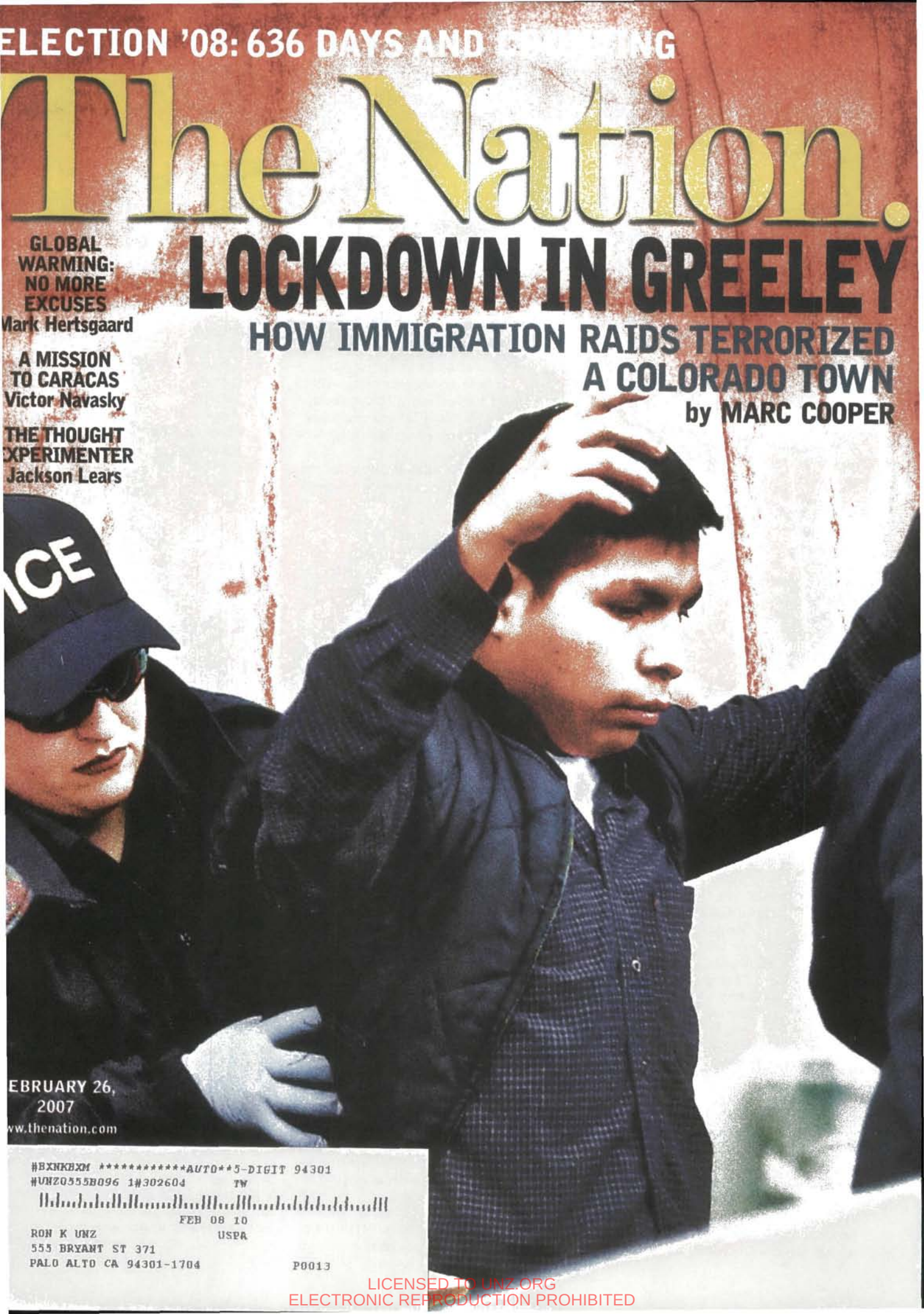
A MISSION TO CARACAS
Victor Navasky

THE THOUGHT XPERIMENTER
Jackson Lears

LOCKDOWN IN GREELEY

HOW IMMIGRATION RAIDS TERRORIZED A COLORADO TOWN

by MARC COOPER



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CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Afghanistan Days, Kabul Nights

Northampton, Mass.

■ I'm glad Peter Bergen ["Waltzing With Warlords," Jan. 1] found things to approve of in my book *Kabul in Winter*. But I'm dumbfounded that he charges me with "sometimes" displaying "a tendency to see sinister conspiracies where they don't exist"—because I give a brief account of the influence of US oil interests on our Afghanistan policy. Surely this is old news.

The prospect of US oilmen building a pipeline from the Caspian fields to Pakistan by way of Afghanistan (thus circumventing Iran) was one reason the Clinton Administration tried to do business with the Taliban. Twice in 1997 Taliban leaders traveled to Washington (and Texas) to discuss the pipeline with officials of the State Department and the US oil conglomerate Unocal. Unocal itself disclosed that it spent between $15 million and $20 million on the initial stages of the project, including the salaries of two consultants hired to negotiate the deal: Hamid Karzai, now President of Afghanistan, and Zalmay Khalilzad, then a Pentagon planner, later Ambassador to Afghanistan and currently Ambassador to Iraq. Khalilzad's predecessor in Afghanistan, George W. Bush's first ambassador there, was Robert Finn, well-known Caspian oil expert. These facts, well documented by others, apparently suggest a "sinister conspiracy"—Bergen's term, not mine.

He doesn't quit there. According to Bergen, I write that Washington withdrew support from the Taliban "only" because the Taliban could not provide "security" for the pipeline project. This is a misrepresentation. In fact, I discuss at length what Bergen calls "the real reasons" the United States turned against the Taliban: their harboring of Al Qaeda and their treatment of women—although US concern for Afghan women has always been more PR than policy.

Bergen asserts, "The one thing the Taliban did provide was security, which is why they had legitimacy and popularity when they first came to power." This received wisdom applies to the Taliban's reception in southern Afghanistan but not the north, where anti-Taliban forces went on fighting. In addition Bergen says there is still no pipeline across Afghanistan "because it just doesn't make economic sense to build it." There is no pipeline today because there is still no security, the United States and NATO having thus far failed, like the Taliban, to provide it.

That doesn't mean dreams of oil are over. Plenty of people have pocketed plenty of money merely by making plans, and Afghan officials periodically announce that construction is imminent. Recently a US construction firm and a Russian manufacturer of oilfield equipment formed a "strategic alliance" to "help the Government of Afghanistan reopen and redevelop its oil and gas fields." The press release went by e-mail to US contractors under the heading "Smart place to be sending your resumes/CVs" and opened with this advisory: "It's private sector, so it'll pay." Is that a "sinister conspiracy" too, or oil business as usual in post-conflict "development" zones?

Bergen takes me to task for recycling "the trope" that in the 1980s, during the US proxy war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the CIA spent about $800 million to train and fund foreign "Arab-Afghan" fighters. To refute it, Bergen says that Steve Coll's *Ghost Wars* shows "there is no evidence" that the CIA "had any direct dealings with Osama bin Laden and his crew of foreign fighters." I confess I'm unable to locate that conclusion in Coll's pages, but it is beside the point. (Since the CIA is in the business of covering its tracks, it is naïve to think that "no evidence" of "direct dealings" means no dealings; Coll discusses any number of intermediaries, such as the Afghan commander Jallaladin Haqqanni, who "had the CIA's full support.") Bergen mistakenly implies that all Arab-Afghan fighters belonged to bin Laden's "crew." But recruiting and training foreign jihadis was the policy of Pakistan's ISI long before bin Laden set up his own camp in 1986; and it was a policy CIA Director Bill Casey fully approved. Many of the estimated 35,000 Arab-Afghans of the 1980s were not Arabs but Uighurs, Uzbeks, Filipinos and other foreign jihadis (from forty-three countries) who joined and fought for various CIA- and Saudi-funded, ISI-directed, Afghan mujahedeen parties, as did bin Laden himself before he came into his own. ANN JONES

Chicago

■ I was dismayed by the tone of Peter Bergen's review of three books about contemporary Afghanistan by Western authors. He starts off with a salacious and pointless description of his visit to a Kabul brothel staffed by Chinese women "where $60 will buy you more stimulating forms of intercourse" than conversation. He states that a large part of the Taliban's current strength comes from "a generally conservative population who worry about corrupting foreign influences"; perhaps, but might it not also come from people's anger at a brutal foreign invasion and occupation?

Bergen laments the decline of optimism (from whom?) about "President" Hamid Karzai, who would be, and has been, more accurately described as the "mayor of Kabul"—and even that position is looking increasingly tenuous. The real power in those parts of Afghanistan not under Taliban control is, and has been from the start of the invasion, foreign military forces, principally the United States, for whom Karzai has never been anything more than a puppet. Remember his disastrous trip here not so long ago, and his humiliation by Bush?

Bergen refuses to consider the possibility that US motives for invading and occupying Afghanistan could have been anything but pristine, dismissing the idea that interest in a pipeline might have influenced US actions; he states without proof that the "real reasons" were Taliban mistreatment of women and the Taliban's harboring of Al Qaeda. The latter reason is more plausible but fails to take into account the abundant evidence that neocons had been planning a move like this long before 9/11. Bergen also flatly denies that the CIA might have helped fund Osama bin Laden's fighters during the Soviet occupation (actually, he only denies any *direct* contact).

The root of Bergen's myopia comes from his belief that where the foreign occupation failed was in its attempt at "the wholesale export of Western democratic values and institutions into countries with very different social mores and political structures." So, you see, Americans invaded Afghanistan, destroyed whatever there was left to destroy, killed unknown numbers of Afghans and continue to oppress them, all for the sake of Western democratic values, which those poor benighted Afghans are just too backward to appreciate. DEREK DAVIS

BERGEN REPLIES

Washington, DC

■ Thanks to Ann Jones for her letter. I described her book as "evocatively" written, a "devastating critique" and "deeply reported." There were two factual matters I took issue with. I don't dispute that there was a widely reported effort by US energy interests to play footsy with the Taliban during the mid-1990s, when they first came to power. But I noted that Jones erroneously suggests that this effort fell through because the Taliban could not provide security. In reality the Taliban's dismal human rights record and harboring of Al Qaeda sabotaged the project. As someone who spent time in Afghanistan during the civil war of the early 1990s before the rise of the Taliban, visited on two long trips while the Taliban were in power and has been back more than half a dozen times since they were ousted, I can attest that the one thing the Taliban did provide was security, the issue that continue

(Continued on Page 22)

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PRINTED FEBRUARY 7 VOLUME 284, NUMBER 8

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Cover design by Avenging Angels, photo by Richard Hackett; page 11 photo by Richard Hackett, Longmont Daily Times-Call; illustrations by Christoph Niemann and Peter O. Zierlein

EDITORIALS

Into 2008

On the eve of the 1992 elections, novelist E.L. Doctorow reminded *Nation* readers why the bizarre and troubling pageants known as presidential elections matter so deeply. "The President we get is the country we get.... He is the artificer of our malleable national soul." Thanks in part to mass-media suffusion, wrote Doctorow, the President has become "the face of our sky, the conditions that prevail. One four-year term may find us at reasonable peace with one another, working things out, and the next, trampling on each other for our scraps of bread."

Don't we know it—now more than ever. The truth (and implicit peril) of Doctorow's observation has never been more evident than in the endless mudslide of domestic and foreign disasters that have darkened our horizons during George W. Bush's six years in office. In Baghdad and New Orleans, prevailing conditions are stormy at best, bleak and seemingly intractable at worst.

America desperately needs new leadership, not merely a different face. It needs Democrats to do more than recapture the White House in 2008: The fiery tenor of the times also presents a historic opportunity to reverse the destructive course of a quarter-century of backlash-driven politics. Like the Great Depression of the 1930s and the civil upheavals of the 1960s, the unrelenting catastrophes of Bush's presidency have pried open the settled minds of Americans. Ideologies are in flux—and so are partisan loyalties and identities. The 2006 midterms confounded the calculations not only of the GOP, whose culture-war wedges finally lost their magic, but also of the centrist Democratic establishment, whose thin gruel of fiscal conservatism, go-along patriotism and corporate-friendly policy prescriptions proved less attractive to voters than a few maverick Democrats' hearty populist progressivism and unblinking realism about the horrors in Iraq.

Given our profoundly unsettled political climate—and the absence of a sitting President or Vice President in the field for the first time since 1928—it's no wonder so many candidates have already, and so early, put themselves forward. Normally there would be no more dreadful prospect than a two-year campaign for President. But this time around, as they showed with some startling choices for Congress in 2006, more Americans are ready to rethink the givens. It can't hurt—just this once—to have many months to sort through the strengths and defects of the contenders.

The early favorites come heartenigly close, for the first time in our history, to actually "looking like America." It will be tempting for Democratic voters to get caught up in the symbolism of the candidates—not just the "firstness" of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton or Bill Richardson but also the rise of John Edwards from blue-collar beginnings. The symbolic statement that Democrats need to make in 2008, however, runs broader and deeper than race, gender or class. More than a President who looks different, we need one who thinks—and acts—differently. We need a progressive champion who will boldly reassert government's role as protector and uplifter of the people at home, and reinvent American foreign policy as a force for peace, not coercive power, across the globe.

At the same time, we need a leader who shuns the lordly powers that have gradually accrued to the office of the President, and that our current President has taken to lawless extremes. The huge shadow of the chief executive is part of what has deformed our political system, blotting out the rich, boisterous conversations and arguments from below and diminishing the competing influences that ought to inform and shape the national direction. No single person can deliver what we seek if that person isn't both supported by and grounded in a small-d democratic revival—starting with the style and content of the campaign itself. We need a candidate who understands that he or she can't succeed unless the people are standing alongside (ahead of the power brokers and money guys), ready to help enforce their will.

This magazine has already staked out its position on one of the day's great challenges: ending the military occupation

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EDITORIALS

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2007 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. **When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Basic annual subscription price: $52 for 47 issues. Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

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of Iraq. We will not support any candidate who does not call for a speedy withdrawal of our troops. But the nation confronts epochal challenges at home, too. The next President must reform outmoded immigration policies, tackle the national plague of resegregated communities and schools, and address growing economic inequities and insecurities. With whites fast becoming a minority nationwide, blacks still sitting at the back of the economic bus and a historic influx of Hispanics (who have already become the largest and least protected national minority group), there is a widespread racial and social unease simmering below the surface, all across the country. We need a President capable of recognizing it, brave enough to name it and strong enough to heal the breaches before they crack open.

Conservatives have preached for years that government is everyone's problem and nobody's solution—and with the Bush Administration, they have completed the process of turning their preachments into prophecy. The ongoing Gulf Coast catastrophe has exposed more than the racial and economic injustices of our Two Americas; it has also demonstrated the consequences of the effort to rip apart the safety net Democrats had been knitting since 1913. To pull it back together and resuscitate our common purpose, we need a President who can imagine other people's suffering—the suffering of American soldiers and their families, the agony of Iraqi families being blown up and shot up by those boys and girls from Skokie and Mobile and Watts, and the grinding economic uncertainties consuming not just low-wage workers but, increasingly, the middle class. "Feeling pain" is not enough: The times require a President with the courage and vision to use the world's most powerful office to stamp out misery, not multiply it.

Our money-drenched politics makes it difficult for such a figure to emerge. This campaign promises to kill off the notion of public funding for elections once and for all, as candidate after candidate, fearful in particular of being fatally outspent in TV ads, declines the matching public funds that come with spending limits. Thus will the corporations and the K Street crowd gain even greater access to power. It doesn't help that the always problematic primary system, designed to produce stronger candidates by forcing them to woo voters personally in small states like Iowa and New Hampshire, may collapse with early, big-money-driven contests in supersized states like California and Florida.

There is hope in the upsurge of Internet politics, which only began to flash its potential in 2004. When Howard Dean rocketed into the fundraising stratosphere courtesy of a legion of small online donors, and when beleaguered progressives began to connect and organize through web-driven vehicles like MoveOn.org, it became clear that the next technology to dominate politics had the potential to cut in a drastically different direction from the last. With YouTube exposing every candidate's "macaca moment," it has suddenly become vexingly difficult for candidates to hide their warts and control their public image. And the Internet's unprecedented potential for creating unlikely bandwagons and raising big fast money—especially for long-shot insurgents—could shake up American politics in larger and even healthier ways.

As this issue goes to press, 636 days remain till that most welcome of dates: November 4, 2008. Let us—all of us—use this generous gift of time to do more than look for a "winning" candidate

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EDITORIALS

Molly, in Her Own Words

There is the mainstream press and then there was Molly Ivins, who always swam against the tide, and who died January 31 at 62 after a brave battle with breast cancer. Molly was... well, rather than tell you what Molly was—others throughout the land have done that—why don't we just show you? Herewith, from our own pages, a Molly Ivins sampler:

"The bill to make English the Official State Language came to naught, which is just as well since we'd have had to deport the entire state leadership if it was passed. Clements [the governor of Texas]...said he knows the N.C.A.A. has a hard task and he 'commensurates' with 'em and he hopes they 'secede.'" (August 15/22, 1987)

"Former Congressman Tom Loeffler is now the Reagan Administration's new point man...for lobbying on aid to the *contras*. Loeffler...is the guy who thinks you get AIDS through your feet, as we learned when he wore shower caps on his while on a trip to San Francisco, lest he acquire the disease from the bathroom tile." (August 15/22, 1987)

"In the line of journalistic duty, I attended the God and Country Rally featuring Phyllis Schlafly, Pat Robertson and Pat Boone, and am filing a worker's compensation claim against *The Nation*." (September 14, 1992)

On the State Attorney General (Jim Mattox): "He's so mean he wouldn't spit in your ear if your brains were on fire." (February 7, 1994)

"I have always claimed that being a literate Texan is like being bilingual." (July 3, 1995)

"We are also pleased to announce the re-election of Senator Drew Nixon of Carthage: Nixon is the fellow who was found by Dallas police in a car with not one but three prostitutes. He explained he thought they were asking for directions." (November 25, 1996)

"We also elected some railroad commissioners, who more or less—mostly less—regulate the oil bidness, and that makes as much sense as anything else in this Great State." (November 25, 1996)

"I know what kind of governor this guy has been—if you expect him to do for the nation what he has for Texas, we need to talk." (January 3, 2000)

We could go on, but as Molly might have said, "Well, sheesh."

For tributes by Ronnie Dugger and others, go to www.thenation.com.

Let us imagine, and insist upon, the election of a President with the broad heart, the sharp but open mind and the principled passion to seize the opportunity that now exists for a long-term political realignment in America—who can set not only Democrats but a strong national majority back on track toward the goals of equality, opportunity, true democracy and social justice.

COMMENT

Killer Weather Ahead

There is implicit good news in the mostly bad news in the latest big global warming report: From now on, politicians will find it harder to do little or nothing to fight this problem. The release of the report on February 2 by the world's leading scientific body on global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), ranks as a landmark development. Using unusually blunt language for a scientific document, the report describes global warming as "unequivocal" and says it is "very likely" caused by humans. The results, according to the report, will likely include more frequent heat waves and stronger droughts and storms, while sea levels will continue to rise for more than a thousand years. The silver lining is that such plain-spoken warnings should make it difficult for anyone to argue that greenhouse gas emissions should not be reduced. Capitol Hill already had been aflutter with prospective global warming bills; the report makes it more likely that one will land on George W. Bush's desk by year's end. Bush will face a choice: Sign the bill despite the presumed opposition of the oil and coal interests he has championed, or veto it and leave fellow Republicans open to attack on what's shaping up as a top-tier issue in the 2008 elections.

As for the bad news in the report, it confirms that the battle to prevent global warming has been lost. Now the race to survive it has begun. Because we waited so long to act, the best humanity can do now is slow global warming down to where we can hope to endure it with relatively manageable damages. How bad things eventually get will depend on how much greenhouse emissions are cut, and how quickly. But the momentum of the climate system—the fact that carbon dioxide remains in the atmosphere for decades, and oceans store heat for centuries—guarantees that global warming will get worse before it gets better (unless someone invents a miracle technology to strip existing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere).

Even if humanity stopped all greenhouse gas emissions today, the IPCC notes, global temperatures would still rise 1.1 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. An immediate stop is impossible; it would mean shutting off every electric power plant, automobile, furnace and other device anywhere in the world that runs on oil, coal or natural gas, as well as halting tropical rainforest destruction. Thus the IPCC calculates a range of possible future temperature increases that vary by how quickly emissions are or are not reduced. At the very least, says the report, temperatures will rise

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COMMENT

2.0 degrees Fahrenheit by 2100, assuming a rapid shift away from fossil fuels. More likely is an increase of 3.2 to 7.2 degrees.

These numbers imply that there is very little time for humanity to avoid passing a climate threshold known as the two-degree target. Endorsed by the European Union and many top scientists as the maximum amount of warming above pre-industrial-era levels that humanity can tolerate before damages become unmanageable, the target can be confusing to Americans because it refers to two degrees Celsius. The equivalent in Fahrenheit is 3.6 degrees. At first glance, that sounds roomy enough. After all, the IPCC estimates that "likely" future temperature rise will range between 3.2 and 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit; thus if we decarbonize our economies fast enough to hit the low end of that range, the threshold could be avoided. The problem is, humanity's past greenhouse emissions have already caused the temperature to rise 1.1 degrees Fahrenheit over the last century. That means we will pass the threshold if we raise the temperature by only 2.5 degrees—barely more than the lowest amount the IPCC considers feasible. And even in that case, we will still face considerable sea-level rise and more killer heat waves, droughts and hurricanes.

There are no good answers to global warming, only degrees of bad. But speedy action might let us avoid the most catastrophic scenarios. Scientists say we must cut emissions 80 percent by 2050, which is what the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act, sponsored by Bernie Sanders, Barbara Boxer and others, mandates. Habitual foot-draggers ExxonMobil and the Bush Administration look almost comical as they reposition themselves for the battle to come. Bush uttered the words "global climate change" in a State of the Union address for the first time last month; ExxonMobil announced it would stop funding some climate-change deniers. But neither the White House nor the oil giant accepts mandatory limits on greenhouse emissions. They simply recognize that Congress is going to pass a bill this year, and they know that in Washington if you don't have a seat at the table, you're on the menu. Defenders of the status quo will want a bill that sounds good but does little except defuse pressure for real change. And that would be the worst outcome of all. MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation's environment correspondent, is a fellow of The Nation Institute.

CALVIN TRILLIN

THE MADNESS OF NANNY DICK

So Cheney now seems bonkers.
As his condition grows
More serious, will he tell us
It's "in its final throes"?

Mission to Caracas

On December 29 Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela, recently re-elected with a whopping 61 percent of the vote, announced his intention not to renew the broadcast license of Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), whose concession will expire in May. "They better go packing," he said, adding lest he be misunderstood, "Start turning your equipment off."

The announcement was not out of the blue, since a few days earlier Venezuela's Minister of Communication and Information, William Lara, had said that licenses of privately owned media would be subject to revision, and the fate of RCTV would be decided by popular survey. Chávez now put it more colorfully. His Venezuela, he said, would not tolerate media "at the service of coup-plotting, against the people, against the nation, against the national independence and against the dignity of the Republic." And when José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, denounced the move as censorship, Chávez called him a *pendejo* ("asshole"—translated by US media as "idiot") who had no business intervening in Venezuela's internal affairs.

In the weeks that followed, Chávez persuaded the legislature to give him the power to rule by decree for eighteen months, made known his plan to consolidate the parties of the left into one and announced his intention to nationalize various industries. Along the way he described Jesus Christ as "the greatest socialist in history," ended a speech to the National Assembly by shouting "Socialism or death!" and, after US officials expressed concern about recent developments, advised, "Go to hell, gringos! Go home!"

* * *

When Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, proposed last summer that I join a mission to Caracas, I had my qualms. First, I didn't speak Spanish (an interpreter can fix that, said Joel); second, I knew Chávez was overwhelmingly popular with the poor and I wasn't interested in participating in an anti-Chávez hit job, even in the worthy cause of human rights. I quickly learned that under Chávez the National Assembly had passed the potentially repressive Law of Social Responsibility, which for example bars stations from broadcasting messages that "promote, defend or invite breaches of public order" or are "contrary to the security of the nation." I also knew that in 2005 the National Assembly had increased criminal penalties for defamation and slander. But I shared Naomi Klein's view (published here March 3, 2003) that it was "absurd to treat Chávez as the principal threat to a free press in Venezuela. That honor clearly goes to the media owners themselves." (In the days leading up to the brief 2002 coup against Chávez, RCTV, as well as the three other major private stations, blanketed the airwaves with anti-Chávez speeches, interrupted only by oil company "public service" commercials, run free of charge, calling on viewers to take to the streets. When the coup began to collapse, RCTV blacked out the news, ran cartoons and instructed its staff to keep Chavistas off the air.)

Joel persuaded me that the mission, to be put together by CPJ's Carlos Lauria, in whose bona fides I had confidence, had no hidden agenda. Moreover, Joel argued, perhaps my *Nation* connec-

(*Continued on Page 23*)

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COMMENT

Kill the Death Penalty

Working as a police officer, I have a unique vantage point from which to view the death penalty: It is no less than a vestige of medievalism. I have to live with the fact that at any given moment, to protect someone's life, I might become the judge, jury and executioner. I would lose no sleep if that came about. I have stood over corpses of children and elderly victims, I have seen perpetrators and victims of gang violence and I have investigated sickening murders where an entire family was bound and burned to death. I have met more than my share of cold-blooded murderers, including some in my own family. I have also lost dozens of my family members in religious massacres; one of my uncles was blown to bits by a bomb planted by terrorists.

The pain, suffering, bitterness and the feeling of helplessness leave a never-healing mark on a victim's family. Years after some of my uncles and aunts were murdered, my father still harbors hatred in his heart, thinks of revenge and ruminates over how things could have been different. On the other hand, having a close relative in my own family who killed three elderly people in cold blood has shown me another side of the picture. Instead of a caricature of a "murderer" we can all hate and condemn with ease, I was forced to see the human face on the criminal and the crime. I have also learned that the pain and suffering are not limited to the victim's family. Not only did we feel humiliated and disgraced, my relative's parents lay awake nights wondering what went wrong and whether they could have raised their child differently.

I don't condone what my relatives did, and I don't ask for mercy for them. I have no sympathy for killers, and I support the harshest punishment for homicide. Nevertheless, I firmly oppose the death penalty.

I have heard all the arguments supporting capital punishment and found them wanting. Moral arguments to support capital punishment are inadequate. For example, some people argue that if I kill someone, I give up my right to live. That might be a defensible principle if every murderer was, in fact, sentenced to death; but that's not the case. We play the role of God by judging who will die and who will live, while capital punishment sends out a dangerous message to impressionable minds that violence is a way to resolve problems.

Geography, politics, socioeconomic status of the victim and killer, timing, prosecutorial selection, jury composition, jurisdiction of police investigating the crime and the victim's and killer's gender and skin color usually determine who gets the death sentence. When it comes to the death penalty, there is only one deduction: This punishment is totally arbitrary and therefore should be held unconstitutional. Unfortunately, the politics of expedience guides our Supreme Court and Congress—and when it comes to capital punishment, we are still mired in the Dark Ages.

Since 1976 there have been more than half a million homicides in the United States, but the number of convicts on death row hovers near 3,300, and we have executed just over a thousand. In simple terms, since 1976, on average, roughly 20,000 people have been killed in America every year and just over thirty executed for murder. Considering that homicide has the highest "solved" rate of all serious crime (62 percent in 2002) and we send barely one out of 100 convicted murderers to death row, one might naïvely believe we are sending the worst murderers to death row. That deduction is not only naïve but dangerous. Between 1976 and 2005, 123 people convicted of murder and awaiting execution were exonerated, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Some were minutes from execution; most had spent more than ten years on death row. How many innocent people have we executed? Herein lies the two-pronged failure of capital punishment: irrational and arbitrary sentencing to death of a small number of murderers, and wrongful conviction and sentencing to death of many innocent people. These reasons should be sufficient to outlaw capital punishment.

I must emphasize that most of the convicts on death row are guilty, and the vast majority of police are honest and do their jobs honorably. But our criminal justice system does have corrupt prosecutors, lying crime-lab analysts, crooked cops and blind judges who have railroaded innocent people onto death row. It is impossible to design a perfect system. The most powerful moral, legal and professional argument against the death penalty is that it leads to execution of the innocent. We brazenly act as if we were God and condemn people to death, ignoring that we are mistake-prone humans. And if a democratic society executes criminals knowing that some may be innocent, aren't we all guilty of murder? I wouldn't want any innocent to be killed on my account.

There is a caveat that must be seriously considered by those of us who oppose the death penalty. We should never concentrate our efforts solely on the manifold problems of the death penalty or, as some do, on the humanity of the killer. It is immoral to ignore the victims' pain. We must pay equal attention to compassionate support for the families and other loved ones of the victims.

The fight against capital punishment takes on added importance in the era of the Roberts Supreme Court. While there was some revision of the death penalty under previous Courts, the current bench seems intent on overruling precedents that have stood for more than ninety years—as shown in its decision throwing out the "knock and notice" requirement during warrant searches.

An effective alternative to the death penalty already exists. Life in prison without parole is moral, practical and far less expensive than the complicated and flawed process that leads to the death chamber. With life imprisonment, the murderer is removed from society and forgotten, so that attention can be turned to the victim's family and their needs. The time has come to join the rest of civilized nations and abolish capital punishment. SUNIL DUTTA

Sunil Dutta, a sergeant in the Los Angeles Police Department, is working on a memoir, From Punjab to South Central Los Angeles.

ON THE WEB: Is George W. Bush our worst President ever? Nicholas von Hoffman examines the evidence (take our online poll). VideoNation report: Katrina vanden Heuvel challenges Congress to use its power of the purse on Iraq. William Greider on former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel's quixotic quest for the Democratic presidential nod.

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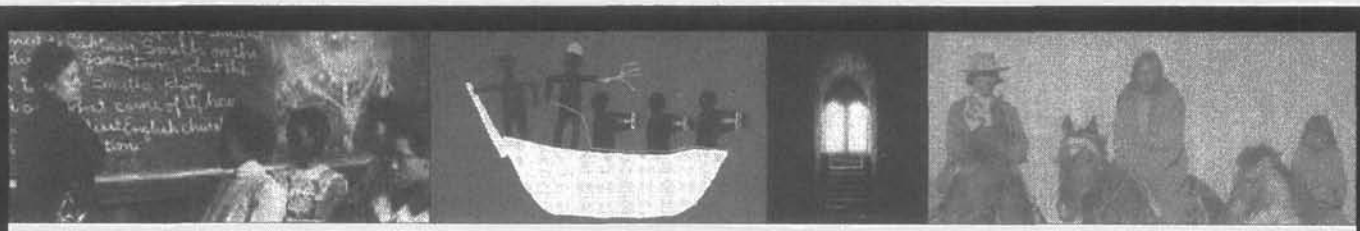

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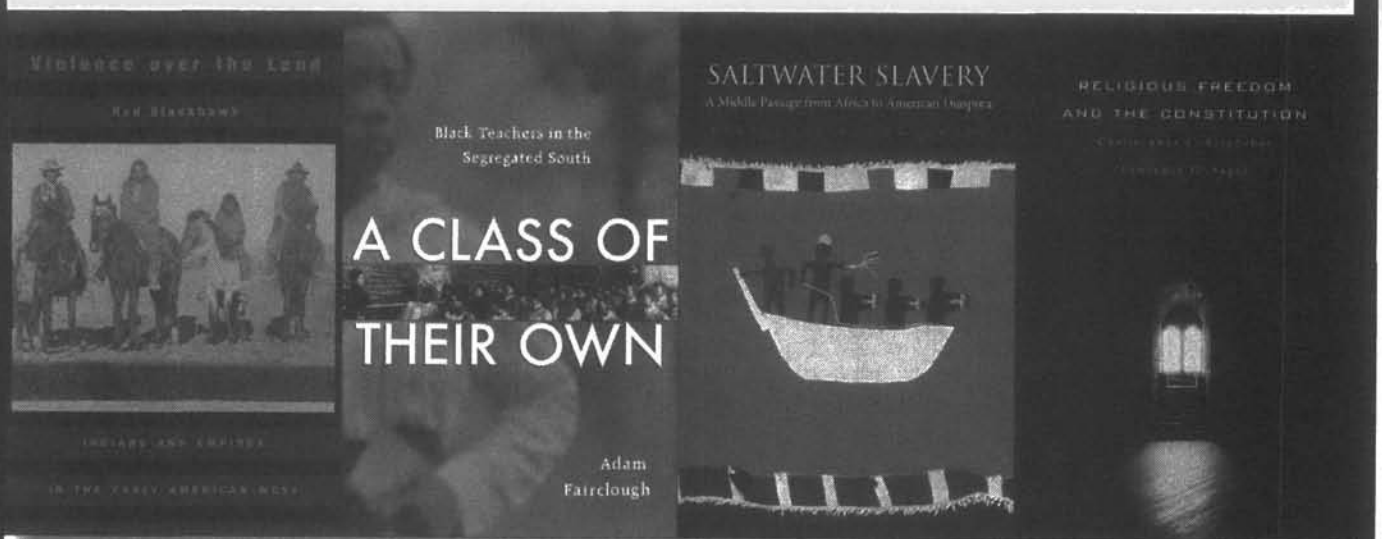
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ERIC ALTERMAN

Dude! Where's My Debate?

Lest I appear obsessed with how (simultaneously) wrong and out-of-touch mainstream pundits were about Iraq, let's turn now to trade, where conventional conservative wisdom is, amazingly, even more dominant.

A demand for tougher trade policies was nearly as fundamental to the success of the 2006 Democratic electoral sweep as opposition to Bush's catastrophic war. "There has been an evolution among almost all Democrats that these trade agreements simply need to be constructed in a different way—for fair trade, not for free trade," a victorious Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio explained. In Virginia, James Webb promised, "We are going to work very hard on issues of economic fairness in a country that has become too divided by class.... We must re-examine our tax and trade policies." And Rhode Island's Sheldon Whitehouse beat Lincoln Chafee, despite the latter's anti-Bush stance, by proclaiming, "It's time to reject trade deals like NAFTA and CAFTA that fail to protect American jobs."

Now, how many mainstream pundits share the fair-trade view endorsed by so many millions of voting Americans and demonstrated in decades of polls conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs? Virtually none. "Free trade," really just a nice name for a free *investment* policy that allows global corporations to move production and capital around the world with no thought to the human and environmental consequences and that offers countless exceptions when the powerful are threatened, is the religion of the American elite. The primary punditocracy outliers—Pat Buchanan and Lou Dobbs—oppose it from a right-wing nativist perspective. The columns by the *Washington Post*'s invaluable Harold Meyerson—which reflect a progressive, pro-labor, pro-environment, fair-trade perspective—may make him the only mainstream pundit with mainstream values on the issue.

As with Iraq, the punditocracy not only embraces a theoretical model that bears little resemblance to reality but also insults the intelligence and integrity of anyone who dares disagree. One expects such tactics from ABC's Cokie Roberts, Washington's most reliable weather vane of conventional wisdom. Earlier this year she warned that if Democrats pursue fair-trade instead of free-trade policies, they will be "essentially on the wrong side of history with globalization." Even among liberals, fealty to free trade is nearly as reflexive. During the 2004 election, *New York Times* "liberal" Nicholas Kristof went so far as to equate mistrust of corporate-friendly free-trade arguments with attempts to spread lies about John Kerry's war record. Kristof opined, "Intellectual consistency requires a tough look first at one's own shortcomings. So Republicans should be denouncing the smear against Kerry's war record, and Democrats should be denouncing their candidate's protectionist tone on trade." Kristof did not seem to realize that he was equating deliberate lies and slander—of a war hero, no less—with an honest disagreement on a matter of policy.

Kristof sounds kind of open-minded when compared with his colleague on the page, Thomas Friedman. Asked at a speaking gig, "Mr. Friedman, is there any free-trade agreement you'd oppose?" Friedman replied, "No, absolutely not," adding, "You know what, sir? I wrote a column supporting the CAFTA, the Caribbean Free Trade initiative. I didn't even know what was in it. I just knew two words: 'free trade.'" (Um, dude, you also didn't know its name: It's the Central American Free Trade Agreement.) Friedman has explained to those who disagree with him that there was "a country that tried that. It guaranteed everyone's job, maintained a protected market and told everyone else how to live. It was called the Soviet Union."

This column is not going to settle the dispute over whether the United States needs a tougher trade policy. I happen to think so, but I don't expect to convince, say, Paul Krugman or Jagdish Bhagwati that I am right and they are wrong. My question is this: Why does the opinion of the majority of the country get nothing but contempt in public discourse? Are Americans who question the dogma of "free trade" merely "duped by knaves like Pat Buchanan," as Friedman insists? Why are the arguments of economists like Frank Taussig, Dani Rodrik, Dean Baker and the folks over at the Economic Policy Institute considered beyond the bounds of rational debate? Of course, the inherent bias of the economics profession is one answer. But so too, I fear, are the results of globalization, which are largely great for the rich but not so hot for those holding on to their livelihoods by a rapidly fraying thread. A report issued by the American Political Science Association in 2004 titled *American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality* noted, "Skewed participation among citizens and the targeting of government resources to partisans and the well-organized ensure that government officials disproportionately respond to business, the wealthy." As a result, less-advantaged Americans "are so absent from discussions in Washington that government officials are likely to hear about their concerns, if at all, from more privileged advocates who speak for the disadvantaged. Politicians hear most regularly about the concerns of business and the most affluent." This is true in terms of indirect as well as direct influence. Wealthy people and their corporations own newspapers and fund think tanks, public affairs television, university chairs, advertising campaigns, lecture series and the like. Ordinary people do not. With few exceptions, these same organizations and institutions represent the views of the wealthy and well connected.

"It's all very well to sympathize with the working man," William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, once remarked. "But we get our money from the other side, and we can't afford to offend them."

* * *

This feels like the right place to mention how much I regret the loss of Molly Ivins, who over and over showed us the meaning of toughness and compassion, to say nothing of fun. She is already deeply missed.

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ARTICLES

LOCKDOWN IN GREELEY

How Immigration Raids Terrorized a Colorado Town

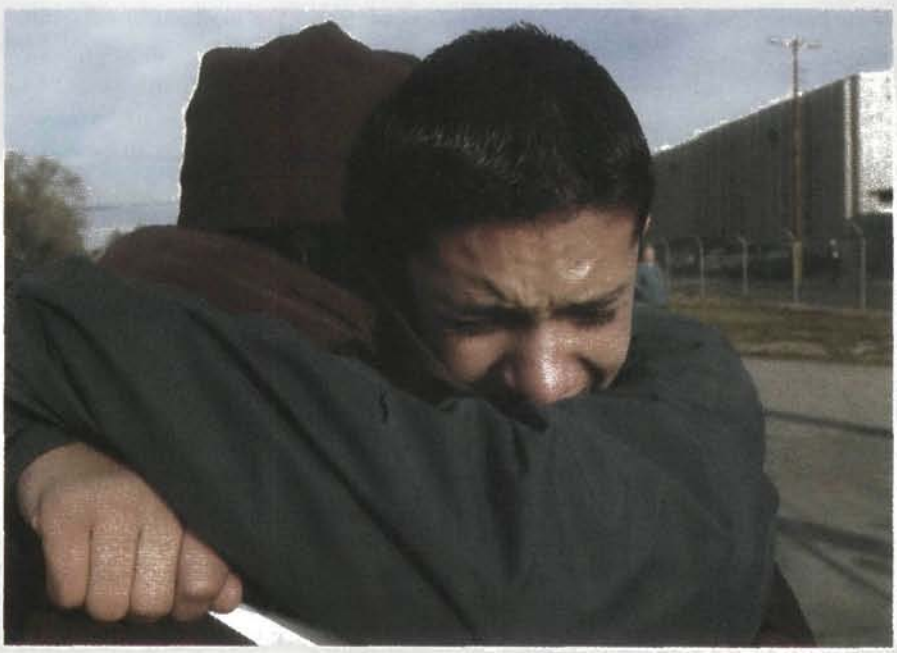
BY MARC COOPER

Greeley, Colorado

On the northern edge of this frozen-over city of 90,000 halfway between Denver and Cheyenne, Swift & Co.'s beef processing plant squats like a windowless concrete bunker alongside the snow-covered railroad tracks. The winter air hangs heavy with the stench of animal waste. And the three strings of barbed wire atop the chain-link fence that girdles the facility give the hulking complex all the appeal of some forsaken, remote prison. Nevertheless, the steam snaking high and gently from the plant's smokestacks has for several decades served as a beacon of hope and promise for thousands of immigrants, mostly Mexican, who have come north looking for a better life.

Working on the meatpacking floor can be a grueling, monotonous, dangerous routine, making thousands of the same cuts or swipes every day, and annual injury and illness rates might run 25 percent or more, but a union job with a wage of $12–$13 an hour, enough to support a family, seems worth the pain and risk.

At least until December 12, the holiday celebrating the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe. What materialized in front of the Swift gates that morning was more like a vision of hell. Shortly after 7 AM a half-dozen buses rolled up with a small fleet of government vans, which unloaded dozens of heavily armed federal agents backed by riot-clad local police. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents sealed off all entrances and exits and formed a perimeter around the factory. Then others barged inside and started rounding up the whole workforce.



Some of the frightened workers jumped into cattle pens; others hid behind machinery or in closets. Those who tried to run were wrestled to the ground. Sworn statements by some workers allege that the ICE agents used chemical sprays to subdue those who didn't understand the orders barked at them in English. The plant's entire workforce was herded into the cafeteria and separated into two groups: those who claimed to be US citizens or legal residents and those who didn't.

While the Greeley plant was being locked down, more than 1,000 ICE agents simultaneously raided five other Swift factories in Texas, Iowa, Nebraska, Utah and Minnesota. By the end of the day, nearly 1,300 immigrant workers had been taken into custody—about 265 of them from Greeley. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff boasted that the combined raids amounted to the largest workplace enforcement action in history. ICE Assistant Secretary Julie Myers would later claim that Operation Wagon Train, as the raids were dubbed, dealt a major blow in the "war against illegal immigration."

Now critics of the raids—workers, union reps, clergy, community leaders, policy analysts and lawyers—wonder what the high-profile sweep accomplished other than to traumatize a few hundred Latino families and to cost Swift an estimated $30 million in lost production. If anything, it starkly reveals, once again, a federal immigration policy completely detached from economic and social realities and a Bush White House incapable of moving ahead with much-promised reform. "What has changed because of all this?" rhetorically asks Francisco Granados, a Greeley businessman and volunteer providing relief services to the affected families. "Nothing. *Nada*. The whole system is set up to make you lie."

There was one new twist in the December 12 action that distinguished it from earlier headline-making sweeps. Homeland Security and ICE claimed the raids were triggered by a federal probe into identity-theft rings. Eventually, about 240 workers were hit with criminal charges, mostly involving the use of a false or stolen Social Security number. But that meant the other thousand or so detained workers were held only on immigration violations, undermining the identity-theft rationale for the roundup.

"By saying these raids were about identity theft, ICE and the Bush Administration suddenly changed the rules of the game," says Mark Grey, director of the Iowa Center for Immigrant Leadership and Integration. By highlighting the identity-theft angle, DHS officials have cast into a sinister light a common practice, at worst a victimless crime. The undocumented workers caught up in the sweep weren't using other identities to run up

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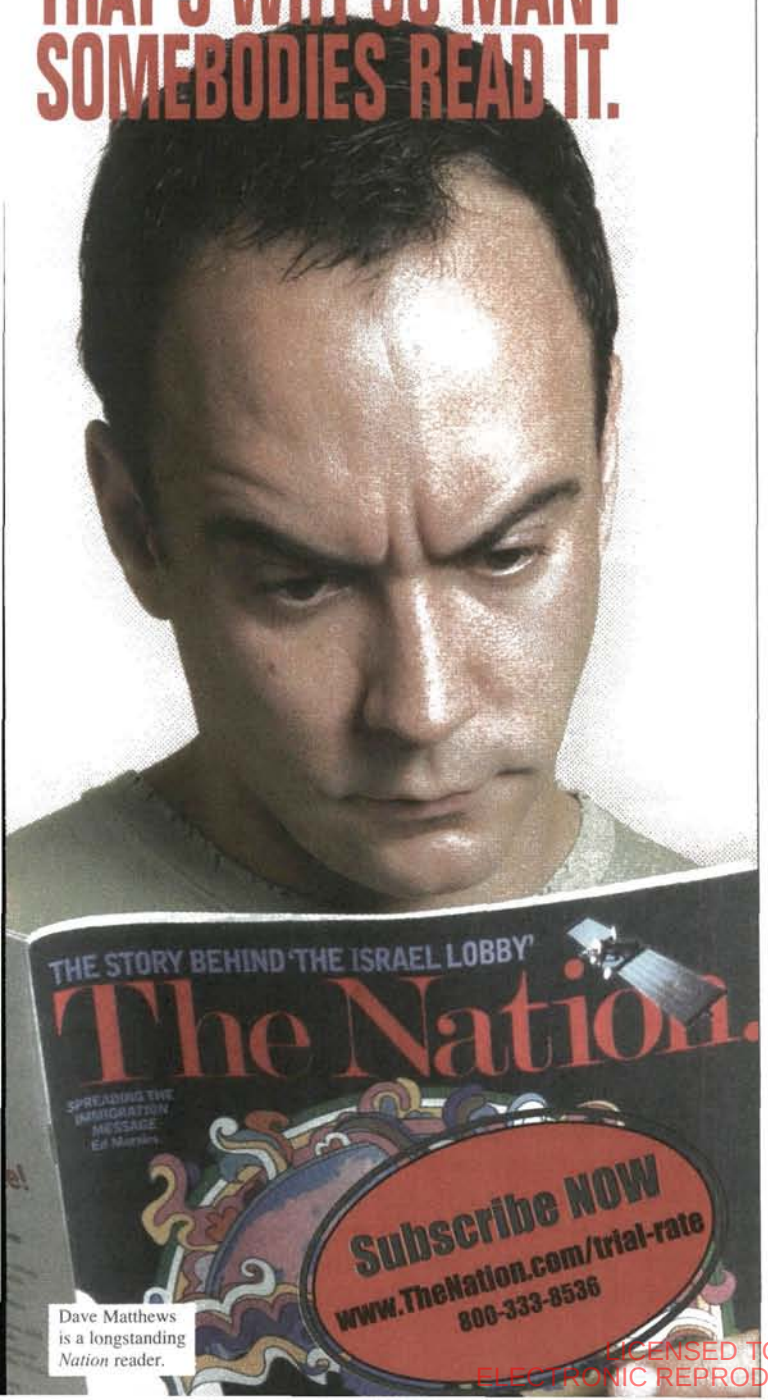

Dave Matthews is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

someone's credit card bill or push someone into financial ruin but to collect their own paychecks, since they had used others' Social Security numbers to get on payroll. Says Grey: "The game until now has been an elaborate choreography among the employers who need the immigrant workers, the immigrants who want these jobs, the communities who need them, the cattlemen who depend on them and the government whose basic motto has been: Don't ask, don't tell."

Swift, whose headquarters are here in Greeley, tried unsuccessfully to head off the raids after company records were subpoenaed by ICE last spring. In early December company lawyers were denied a court injunction against the raids. For the past decade, Swift has used the government's Basic Pilot program, which supposedly verifies the validity of each new employee's Social Security number. But the program doesn't catch a number used by multiple individuals. Swift, then, played "the game" and so was ready, on the day of the raid, to issue a statement saying the arrests "violate the agreements" with the government "and raise serious questions as to the government's possible violation of individual workers' civil rights."

What nobody, including ICE, can answer is why, if the real targets were those people with stolen Social Security numbers, federal officials didn't go quietly into the Swift factories and, armed with warrants, simply arrest the suspects. Why the brash paramilitary operation? "I'll tell you why," says an indignant Robert McCormick, a Greeley immigration attorney representing about sixteen of the workers. "This is indeed a declaration of war on the immigrant community. This is about Republicans trying to appease their core bloc of supporters. Yeah, some people got a big kick out of this. But I think most Americans were revolted by it. Here in town, a lot of people have said they want no part of it. And others, I assure you, are going to wind up being very ashamed of it."

When I arrive in Greeley about three weeks after the raids, the entire town seems engulfed by cross-cutting emotions of bewilderment, fear, anger and resolve. United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7, the union that represents the Greeley workers and called the level of the force "totally outrageous," has been struggling to provide minimal legal and humanitarian assistance for those detained and the families left behind. "We still don't know where everybody is. There's still people popping up here and there in different detention centers," says burly Fernando Rodriquez, a director of Local 7, during an interview in his small downtown office. "Things are still chaotic."

Spurred by a lawsuit brought by Rodriquez's union, Denver Federal Judge John Kane found that a month after the raids, ICE had yet to disclose a comprehensive list of exactly who had been detained and where they were being held—or whether they had already been summarily deported. On January 12 he ordered ICE to disclose the whereabouts of all 262 Greeley detainees within ten days. "There are people in custody—there is an urgency to this," an angry Judge Kane told ICE lawyers. ICE finally complied with the court order in late January.

The aggressiveness of the arrests and what followed have

Marc Cooper, a Nation *contributing editor, is a visiting professor and associate director at USC's Annenberg Institute for Justice and Journalism.*

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startled many. "I was amazed by the force used, by the heavy armament," says Democratic State Representative James Riesberg. "Amazed that so many didn't have the bond hearings they were owed, that so many were held without their location disclosed."

When news of the raids broke, Rodriquez entered the plant but ICE officials prohibited him from getting personal information from the workers to pass on to their families. "ICE treated the workers like animals," he says. "Didn't let people eat or drink anything. Didn't let them go to the bathroom. Wouldn't let workers use phones to make arrangements for kids in school or at home." He adds, "This was something you think you might see on TV, but never did I imagine I would actually live through it."

The Greeley Latino community, about 35 percent of the population, was not totally unprepared for the disaster. Political events of the previous year had spurred community organization and generated vibrant new leadership. As word of the raid flashed on local Spanish-language radio, hundreds of worried family members and protesters converged on the factory gates. Local police mobilized to keep the crowd at bay as their loved ones were handcuffed and loaded by ICE into waiting buses. The militarized sweep hit the community like a hurricane, says 33-year-old Sylvia Martinez, one of Greeley's most prominent new Latino activists. "It's frightening to see the power that the federal government has to blow through here and leave a shambles," she says as we eat lunch at one of the town's many Mexican restaurants. "This has been our Katrina, a man-made Katrina. There's no information, no accountability."

As I speak with Martinez, we're joined by a number of relief volunteers, all of whom express something between red-hot anger and sullen resignation over the way, as they see it, they were abandoned by the government. As ICE carted away hundreds of workers, no federal or local official stayed behind to respond to questions, offer any information or deal with shattered families. "Just this morning I was with a 16-year-old Guatemalan boy who came here two months ago with his mother. Now she's been taken away and is detained in Texas," says volunteer Laura Zuniga. "He doesn't speak English, he barely speaks Spanish, and he's been living with people who share his apartment. He's in shock. And there's no one, really no one, in charge."

Swift donated $60,000 to the local United Way. But local activists say too much of the charity money is tied up in red tape. They also cite a lack of solidarity with the detained workers and their families. The local union, they say, hasn't been easy to deal with, and the national labor movement has shown little support.

"The Swift raids are a troubling example of the way enforcement is being increased," says Ana Avendaño, associate general counsel of the AFL-CIO's immigrant worker program. "But, no, we didn't put out any statement on the raids, because [the food workers' union] didn't ask us for anything." That union has affiliated with the new Change to Win coalition—a breakaway from the AFL-CIO—and while both federations support comprehensive immigration reform they have not agreed on a common strategy. "We did feel we were left out there by ourselves in the first couple days," says a national official of the food workers' union. "But then the hotel workers and Change to Win came in with a strong statement of support."

Elected Democratic officials—who now hold the Colorado

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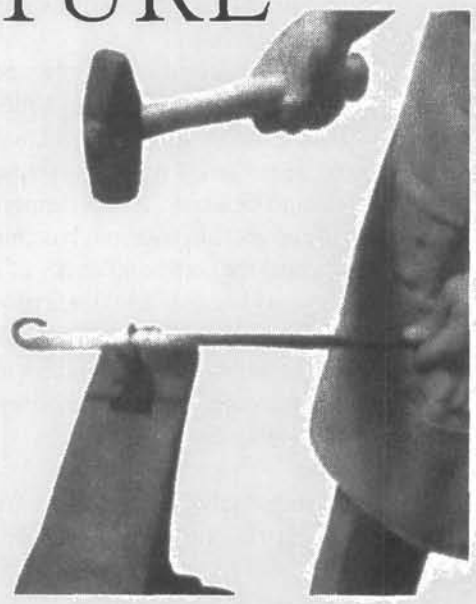
FORGING A RADICAL POLITICAL FUTURE



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Statehouse and a majority in the legislature—have not offered much significant support. "In Colorado," says Sylvia Martinez, "the politicians think it would be political suicide to support these workers." Just last summer, in a special session of the legislature, state Democrats tried to one-up then–GOP Governor Bill Owens in passing a slate of tough anti-immigrant legislation. "Our Democrats have been as unhelpful as the Republicans on the immigration issues," says Lindsey Hodel, field director for the Colorado Progressive Coalition. State Representative Riesberg, who convened a community forum on the Greeley raids in late January and who supports liberalized immigration reform, readily concedes that the prevailing political atmosphere makes it hard for Democrats to speak out. "The people of Colorado have made it clear they want the law to be enforced and are saying, 'What part of illegal don't you understand?'" he says. "But I'm concerned that some of those feelings are based on disinformation."

'In Colorado, the politicians think it would be political suicide to support these workers.' —Sylvia Martinez, Greeley activist

The vacuum left by elected officials has been filled by new grassroots groups like Martinez's Latinos Unidos and their most reliable ally, Father Bernie Schmitz of Our Lady of Peace church. The 59-year-old bespectacled priest has stepped forward as an ardent advocate and defender of the immigrant workers who make up the bulk of his congregation. His church and its social network have become the command center of community relief and have so far raised more than $80,000 in contributions. Family members left behind by the raids can turn to the union and Padre Bernie, as he's called, to pay the utility bills. A food center funded by donations made through the church provides boxes of food for anyone who walks in the door.

On the one-month anniversary of the raids, Father Schmitz organized an interfaith mass that drew dozens on a bitterly cold, snowy weeknight. "Let us pray for the migrant workers," he told those who attended. "Let us who benefit from their labor be grateful to them for what they provide and let us welcome them." In an interview after the mass, Father Schmitz confirms that while his church has been coordinating relief and tending to divided families, he has yet to be contacted by any official from ICE or any other federal agency. "Not that I'd necessarily want to speak to them," he says with a smile.

At a cake and punch reception that evening in the church basement, I meet two middle-aged brothers from Guatemala's western countryside. They speak to me in a Spanish heavily accented with their indigenous Quiché. Another brother and the 22-year-old son of one of them were caught in the raid and now languish with sixty other Guatemalans in an El Paso detention center. Judge Kane ordered them returned to Colorado so they can be assisted by counsel and allowed to post bond, but instead they were held for weeks out of state. "We can't go back to Totonicapán," says Rosalio, referring to the Guatemalan department a lot of them come from. He's been working in Colorado for ten years but has no legal papers. "Back there it's full of organized crime, drug traffickers and injustice." He goes on, "And injustice here as well. It's been very difficult seeing our families taken away from work for no other crime than working."

No one I speak to in Greeley—not Father Schmitz, not Sylvia Martinez, not even the Guatemalans themselves—can tell me of any local Guatemalan leaders, any activists or representatives. All anybody knows is that there are several hundred Guatemalans in town and now dozens of them in jail.

Greeley was founded in 1870 as an experimental farming community organized by Nathan Meeker, the agricultural editor of Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*. By the 1920s the almost uniformly WASP community had grown the area into one of America's most important sugar beet providers. During World War II, German and Austrian POWs housed nearby were used to help tend to the profitable crops. Mexican braceros were also imported to take the place of local men drafted into the war. Cattle processing on a mass scale had come to town by the 1960s. And as the meatpacking industry went through its own labor revolution in the 1980s and '90s—breaking some traditional unions, automating and downgrading much of the workforce to less-skilled, lower-paid positions—the local plant became a magnet for Mexican and Central American migrants.

Like many other mountain and Midwestern cities experiencing similar "browning," Greeley was until recently making an uneasy cultural transition. The more middle-class Anglos, some commuting to Denver to high-tech jobs, live on the manicured west side of town. The newer, darker immigrant population has mushroomed in the grittier eastern and northern neighborhoods. Jerry's Market, founded by German immigrants, soon added a *taqueria*, while *carnicerías* and *tortillerías* appeared on the edge of downtown. The *Greeley Tribune* started publishing a weekly supplement in Spanish. Latinos still had no political representation, but racial conflict was submerged.

Greeley and surrounding Weld County, however, have the misfortune of being a GOP stronghold in an increasingly Democratic state, and thus are vulnerable to hardball partisan manipulation. In the fall of 2005 the politically ambitious county DA, Ken Buck (a Republican married to the current state GOP vice chair), joined forces with Republican US Senator Wayne Allard and conservative US Representative Marilyn Musgrave in proposing that ICE open a local office in Greeley. The trio saw political opportunity in linking illegal immigration to rising crime rates and argued that bringing the immigration cops into Greeley would restore order. The tone for such racially tinged politicking had already been established by fellow Colorado US Representative Tom Tancredo, who built his political profile (and now intends to run for President) on a hard-line anti-immigration position.

"Before the raids, I think we were all trying to move toward some sort of adjustment," says Sylvia Martinez. "But that all changed when Ken Buck made his move." The county commission, without public debate, approved Buck's proposal for a local ICE office. As the measure moved forward, the Latino community began to stir. Longtime Chicano activists and 1960s veterans Priscilla Falcon and Ricardo Romero put together some protest meetings, which soon swelled in size, frequency and intensity. New leaders, including Martinez, emerged.

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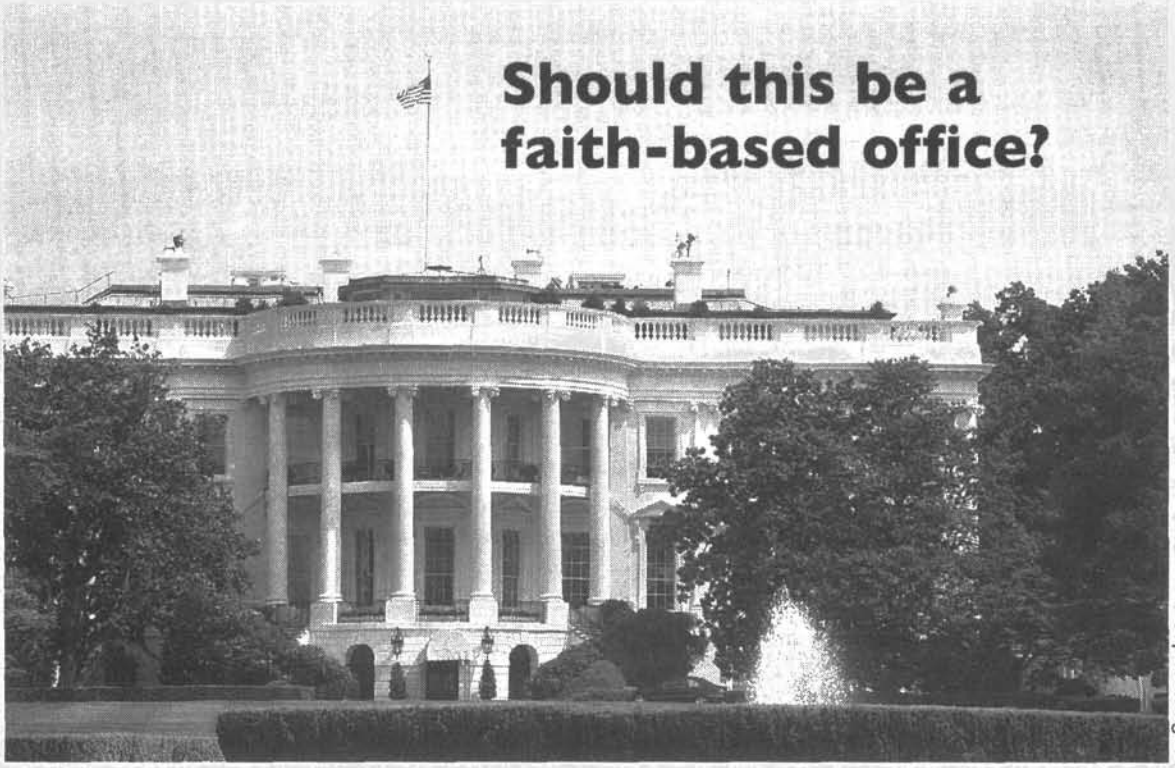

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The Montana-born daughter of Tex-Mex farmworkers, Martinez had worked the fields in her youth and worked her way up to serving as an investigator for the local public defender. While she followed local politics, she didn't get involved until Buck's proposal for the ICE office. "I thought I would be a coward if I didn't stand up against it," she says. As many as 600 people opposed the proposal when it came before the City Council in late 2005. The council punted, and it was scrapped. Local Latino power had won its first victory.

Once again, as the response to the December raids continues to build, that same sort of rising political energy is being felt. "All this stuff has made one great change," says Mexican-born radio announcer Elda Gamez, who became the community's electronic voice as she went live on the air during the day of the raid. "That change is unity. We were hit with a very low blow, but it served us well, and we've gotten support from people we've never heard from before." Father Schmitz is equally optimistic. "This has put a face on the issue," he says. "It's no longer abstract."

What drives that optimism, even in the midst of the current turmoil, is a sense of inevitability. The local migrants, their families and advocates know they are riding the tide of a global economic and demographic wave more powerful than any fleeting enforcement or political gesture. "ICE might think it has changed the rules, but the real game here is supply and demand," says Mark Grey. "This industry and several others would collapse if you removed the immigrant workers. There is simply no going back. The only solution is comprehensive immigration reform which recognizes these realities."

The Clinton Administration carried out similar immigration raids on the meatpacking industry between 1992 and 1997. But that didn't put a crimp in the northward flow of migrants. For millions of Mexicans, the march across the border is a forced exodus, as a couple from Guanajuato tell me when I sit with them in their cramped, drafty trailer in a mobile home park in Greeley. I'll call them Domingo and Emilia; both are in their early 30s. Domingo, an undocumented Swift worker since 2001, was picked up in the December raid, briefly jailed in El Paso and then dumped across the border into Juárez. After a quick trip to see his extended family in Guanajuato, he put together $2,000, paid a coyote and, along with seven other deported Swift workers from his hometown, dodged the Border Patrol and trudged across the Arizona desert back into the United States. He arrived in his Greeley trailer exactly twenty-two days after he'd been arrested.

"I walked for three days and three nights. I was already diabetic, but now I think my leg is ruined," he says, massaging his shin. "But I would do it again tomorrow. And tomorrow and the next day," he says, nodding toward his 3-year-old son, who's running on the threadbare rug in Spiderman pajamas. The boy is a US citizen, as is his 1-year-old sister. Their 8-year-old sister, poring over her homework at the tiny dining table, is not.

Domingo says that from the moment he was detained, he was determined to come back. He knows he can't return to Swift, where he made $12.75 an hour, but he also knows he can't take his family back to Mexico. "There is no work there," he says. The union paid the couple's gas and light bill and gave Emilia a food card worth $50. But no more aid is available, and the family is five days late on the $389 monthly trailer rent. Emilia says the only option to be discarded is returning to Mexico. "This country may not be our country, but it is the country of opportunity," she says, hugging her husband. "This isn't for us. We are Mexicans. This is for them. The children. They are the Americans." ■

KATRINA SURVIVORS ARE FINDING NEW HEALTH PERILS IN THEIR FEMA-SUPPLIED TRAILERS.

Dying for a Home

AMANDA SPAKE

Along the Gulf Coast, in the towns and fishing villages from New Orleans to Mobile, survivors of Hurricane Katrina are suffering from a constellation of similar health problems. They wake up wheezing, coughing and gasping for breath. Their eyes burn; their heads ache; they feel tired, lethargic. Nosebleeds are common, as are sinus infections and asthma attacks. Children and seniors are most severely afflicted, but no one is immune.

There's one other similarity: The people suffering from these illnesses live in trailers supplied by the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

An estimated 275,000 Americans are living in more than 102,000 travel trailers and mobile homes that FEMA purchased after Hurricane Katrina. The price tag for the trailers was more than $2.6 billion, according to FEMA. Despite their cost of about $15,000 each, most are camperlike units, designed for overnight stays. Even if the best materials had been used in their construction—and that is a point of debate—they would not be appropriate for full-time living, according to experts on mobile homes. The interiors are fabricated from composite wood, particle board and other materials that emit formaldehyde, a common but toxic chemical.

"Formaldehyde is a very powerful irritant," says Mary DeVany, an industrial hygienist in Vancouver, Washington. "When you inhale the vapors...the breathing passages close off." The Inter-

Amanda Spake is a Katrina Media Fellow and contributing editor to U.S. News and World Report. *Research for this story was supported by the Open Society Institute.*

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national Agency for Research on Cancer has classified formaldehyde as a human carcinogen. The Environmental Protection Agency has said that more than 0.1 parts per million of formaldehyde in air can cause eye, lung and nose irritation. Few scientists dispute the chemical's power to worsen respiratory health. Yet there is no federal standard for formaldehyde in indoor air, or for travel trailers, and no consensus on whether any "safe" level exists.

Last summer FEMA began distributing a leaflet to trailer residents explaining that the materials used in the interiors can release toxic vapors. The agency suggests residents keep windows and doors open and the air conditioner on, yet reduce heat and humidity. (The Gulf's hot, humid climate increases the rate at which materials release formaldehyde.)

FEMA has not responded to requests for the total number of complaints it has received about formaldehyde—some media reports put the number at forty-six. The agency does say that seventeen trailers in Louisiana had to be replaced because of the chemical.

There is no federal standard for formaldehyde in indoor air, or for travel trailers, and no consensus on whether any 'safe' level exists.

Many residents suffering from symptoms, however, are afraid to complain to FEMA, fearing the agency will take away the only housing they can afford. It was complaints of respiratory problems to the Sierra Club that led the organization to test fifty-two FEMA trailers last April, June and July. Some 83 percent of the thirteen different types tested had formaldehyde in the indoor air at levels above the EPA recommended limit.

Air sampling by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at holding stations where groups of trailers were kept before they were set up revealed high formaldehyde levels even in outdoor air. At the holding station in Pass Christian, Mississippi, formaldehyde in outdoor air was thirty to fifty times the level recommended by the EPA, and several times OSHA's workplace standard.

One of the first to notice an unusual number of illnesses among trailer residents was pediatrician Scott Needle of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. "I was seeing kids and families coming in with repeated, prolonged respiratory illnesses—sinus infections, lingering coughs, viral infections that didn't go away," Needle says. The mothers told him that their children had never been sick like this before. Some of the infants had to be hospitalized. "Over the course of three months, I saw several dozen families with these health problems. That's really high, and this isn't something I'd seen in my practice before. All of them were living in FEMA trailers."

Angela Orcut, a preschool teacher, and her 3-year-old son, Nicholas, are typical of Needle's patients. "Ever since we've lived in this trailer, Nickie wakes up every morning choking and coughing," Orcut says. "He's had so many sinus infections since we moved in here." At night, when the family returns to the closed-up trailer, "the smell burns our noses and our eyes," she says.

Like many trailer residents, Orcut has not filed a complaint with FEMA. "I'm afraid if I complain, they'll take the trailer away," she says. "Then where will we live?"

Paul and Melody Stewart have a similar story to tell about their health problems, which began shortly after moving into a FEMA trailer at the site of their storm-ravaged house. "When we got here, it smelled bad," says Paul, a former Waveland, Mississippi, policeman. Melody woke up the first night they stayed in the trailer, gasping for air. "Within a week," he says, "we both had nosebleeds."

One morning the Stewarts found their cherished pet cockatiel lethargic and unable to stand. They rushed the bird to the vet, who said the cockatiel would die if he were kept in the trailer. Stewart began doing research and discovered that the wood products used to make cabinets, walls and other interior parts could emit formaldehyde, especially in hot, humid climates.

He bought a testing kit for airborne contaminants and sent it back for analysis. In winter, with windows open and the air conditioner on, the test showed, the formaldehyde level in the Stewarts' trailer was more than two times the EPA's limit. Still, FEMA refused to replace the trailer until a story about the Stewarts' formaldehyde problems ran on the local television news. FEMA called the next day to say they were bringing a new trailer.

When the new trailer arrived, the couple could smell formaldehyde before they opened the door. Another was delivered with mold covering the walls. The Stewarts lived in their truck until they took what remained of their insurance settlement and their retirement savings to buy a new trailer at a dealer's lot. This one was made with low-formaldehyde-emitting materials. Their respiratory problems are gone, but plans to rebuild their home are on hold.

Hilda Nelson, 75, of Coden, Alabama, was not as lucky as the Stewarts. When she moved into a FEMA trailer at the site of her former house, she was in good health, says her son, Paul. Three weeks later, he says, "she was having trouble breathing." Not long after, she was diagnosed with pneumonia, then congestive heart failure, a chronic illness that can cause breathing difficulties.

In June 2006 Paul Nelson ordered a kit to test his mother's trailer for formaldehyde. The results showed the level of the chemical inside her trailer was 50 percent over the EPA's recommended limit.

Scientists familiar with toxics agree that elderly people, like infants, are highly susceptible to the hazards of formaldehyde, particularly if they have underlying illnesses. "We started testing in Alabama," explains Becky Gillette, co-chair of the Mississippi Sierra Club, "because we got reports from social workers there that so many elderly people living in the trailers were being hospitalized for respiratory conditions. And many of them were dying."

In October 2006, at the age of 76, Hilda Nelson died, one year and one month after moving into her FEMA trailer. Doctors "never had an answer" as to why her health deteriorated so quickly, says her son. "But I have my suspicions. I point the finger at the formaldehyde."

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